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ABSTRACT

This final report presents conclusions of a study of culturally appropriate employment goals in individual written rehabilitation plans (IWRPs) for American Indians with disabilities. It focuses on goals other than competitive employment and reviews national statistics on work status at closure from all state agencies and 18 tribal VR (vocational rehabilitation)projects. Results are also presented from focus group interviews with state and tribal VR counselors who have experience with placements involving alternatives to competitive employment. Factors in the success of and barriers to the success of these programs are discussed. Certain work status alternatives to competitive employment, especially self-employment, unpaid family worker, and homemaker, are suggested as appropriate for clients living in rural reservation communities. Recommendations urge: (1) recognition of the cultural importance of alternatives to competitive employment; (2) workshops highlighting effective and appropriate uses of the alternatives to effective employment; (3) fully informing clients about legal alternatives to competitive employment; (4) encouragement of self-employment solutions; (5) consultation involving the whole family unit; (6) case studies of successful examples of sheltered workshop programs; and (7) outcome assessments of unpaid family worker and homemaker placements. Four appendices provide additional data on the study's small businesses, focus groups, and data collection instrument. (Contains 35 references.) (DB)

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The Utilization of IWRP [IPE] Goals Other than Competitive Employment for American Indians with Disabilities: A Preliminary Study

Final Report

2001

Principal Investigator: Robert M. Schacht, Ph.D.

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Co-Investigators:

Karla D. Wagner, M.A.

Julie Anna Clay, M.P.H.

Rebecca Vanderbilt, M.A.

Margaret Ligaya White, Ph.D.

American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center

Arizona University Affiliated Program
Institute for Human Development
P.O. Box 5630
Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5630

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(Project Number: R-39)

American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
Arizona University Affiliated Program
Institute for Human Development
Northern Arizona University
PO Box 5630
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
(520) 523-4971 Voice • (520) 523-4791 Fax • (520) 523-1695 TDD
website: http://www.nau.edu/~ihd/airrtc

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This report received major initial development by Karla Wagner, especially in the Introduction and Methodology sections. Julie Clay set up and assisted with most of the conference calls with counselors, resulting in data upon which this report depends. She also assisted with the initial compilation of the transcripts of these calls, which functioned like focus groups. Rebecca Vanderbilt analyzed the transcripts of the conference calls and wrote the first draft of the Results section. Margie White assisted with editing the references and the organization of the Results and Discussion sections, and added text. Robert Schacht was the principal investigator, supervised all stages of report development, wrote the Discussion and Conclusions section, and contributed to all other sections of the manuscript.

When the data for this report were collected, the term "Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP)" was established by legislation, regulation, and practice. Since then, new legislation and regulations replaced the term IWRP with "Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)." This change does not affect the substance of this report because the alternatives to competitive employment remain valid under current regulations. Therefore, the substance of this report has continuing relevancy to the needs of American Indians with disabilities that is not diminished by the change from IWRP to IPE.

Abstract

The vocational rehabilitation (VR) system provides for several kinds of individual written rehabilitation plan (IWRP) goals other than competitive employment, such as sheltered workshops, self-employment, state and tribal agency managed business enterprises, homemaker, and unpaid family worker. When the data for this report were collected, the term IWRP was established by legislation, regulation, and practice. Since then, new legislation and regulations have replaced the former term with "Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)." This report examines culturally appropriate employment goals other than competitive employment that have been used by state VR agencies and tribal VR projects. National statistics on work status at closure from all state agencies and 18 tribal VR projects are presented and discussed. Results are also presented from focus group interviews with state and tribal VR counselors who have experience with placements involving alternatives to competitive employment. Factors in the success, and barriers to the success of these programs are discussed, and recommendations are proposed for use in rehabilitation agencies where employment opportunities other than competitive employment are needed. Certain work status alternatives to competitive employment, especially self-employment, unpaid family worker, and homemaker, seem especially appropriate for rural reservation communities in developing IPEs, despite federal pressures to suppress them, which appears to be culturally insensitive.

The Utilization of IWRP [IPE] Goals Other than Competitive Employment for American Indians with Disabilities: A Preliminary Study

In a national needs assessment survey conducted by the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (AIRRTC), respondents assigned a high priority to the item "Increase employment and employment status" for American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities (Schacht, Vanderbilt & Dorris, 1997; American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 1998). Open-ended comments further supported this response and encouraged the AIRRTC to consider researching employment options other than traditional competitive employment, including subsistence-based employment, traditional jobs such as ranching and farming, self-employment, supported employment, and transitional employment. Thus responses provided by the needs assessment survey indicated a need for investigation regarding the utilization of alternative employment goals in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

In 1989, Keith Anderson, Director of the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Richard Corbridge, Associate Commissioner, Region X, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), wrote a concept paper on what constitutes employment that they presented at a RSA administrator's meeting (Anderson & Corbridge, 1989). They believed that the definitions of *work, employment*, and *employ* as presented in federal regulations, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the RSA manual (referred to in Anderson and Corbridge, 1989) allow for a broad interpretation

that emphasizes competitive employment but does not impede the use of noncompetitive employment opportunities where suitable. Accordingly, they defined employment as:

> Any substantial, meaningful activity to which an individual devotes time and exerts physical or mental effort toward the production or accomplishment of something which significantly contributes to the livelihood of the individual and which benefits society (Anderson and Corbridge, 1989, p. 2).

This became the working definition of employment for the Alaska DVR. Accordingly, Anderson and Corbridge emphasized the need for an investigation into occupational environments other than the traditional competitive job market. They stressed that competitive employment is not always available or feasible in certain communities, such as small American Indian or Alaska Native villages and areas of Indian reservations with a dispersed population and little traditional commercial activity.

An examination of the criteria used by VR counselors in writing individual written rehabilitation plan (IWRP) goals may indicate whether or not clients' cultural backgrounds are elicited to inform employment outcome selection. [When the data for this report were collected, the term IWRP was established by legislation, regulation, and practice. Since then, new legislation and regulations revised the former term with "Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)." The terminology change does not affect the substance of this report because the alternatives to competitive employment remain valid under current regulations.] In this report, the authors analyzed data in RSA employment statistics to determine whether alternative employment options for American Indians with disabilities were being underutilized, despite the economic and cultural advantages of IWRP goals other than competitive employment. Contained herein are data obtained from VR programs that utilized alternative employment goals. The goal of this research was to enable VR programs working with American Indians and Alaska Natives to utilize all appropriate VR employment options to enhance the quality of life of American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities. The questions explored were as follows:

1. On a national basis, what is the relative frequency of alternative employment goals other than competitive employment (e.g., sheltered employment, state

agency managed Business Enterprise Programs (BEP), homemaker, and unpaid family member) for American Indian VR clients, compared with other clients?

2. If the utilization of employment options other than competitive employment differs between American Indian and other VR clients, what are the reasons for this difference? Is the difference due to reluctance on the part of counselors, lack of knowledge of the role Indian crafts can play as an income generator, or lack of interest on the part of clients? Are some of these options more culturally relevant than others?
3. Do successful employment programs other than competitive employment currently exist for American Indian VR clients? If so, where, and what are their characteristics? Are they more culturally appropriate?

The general hypothesis was that, in some cases, alternatives to competitive employment may be more culturally appropriate, especially in rural American Indian and Alaska Native communities where unemployment rates are high, and opportunities for competitive employment are scarce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Economic and Cultural Variables

Both economic and cultural variables may affect the extent to which various communities utilize different employment options. Economic factors such as the availability of competitive employment are especially significant in an examination of employment options used for American Indians, given the high numbers of Native people who live in rural areas and on reservations. The U.S. Census Bureau reported an unemployment rate of 25.6% for American Indians living on reservations and other tribal lands (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993a; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993b). This figure is almost four times the reported 6.3% unemployment rate for the general population. The statistics for American Indians living on and adjacent to reservations are worse: according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, "unemployment on Indian reservations averages about 37%. They experience extreme lack of economic opportunities

and a lower than average quality of iife when measured against the dominant society" (Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.).

Cultural factors may also influence the employment possibilities for American Indians with disabilities. In her work with the Navajo living at Shonto in 1971, Ruffing (1976) examined the economic decision-making processes that informed economic development on the Navajo reservation. She found, as Adams (1955, cited in Ruffing, 1976) had before her, that the people at Shonto chose employment options in a system of preferred ordering. The Navajos living at Shonto chose to perform traditional subsistence activities first, followed by local wage work and nonlocal wage work. Even when the nonlocal wage work consisted of railroad work that, at the time, was paying 95% more than subsistence income, most people still opted to stay at home. Ruffing (1976) explained this choice, seemingly illogical by economic standards, by examining the cultural norms of Navajo society. She stated that Navajo society is communal and based on the nuclear family, extended family, and tribe. The individual is not a central influence in economic development or decision-making. Therefore, she stated that one possibility for the hesitancy of Shonto Navajos to leave home for high-paying railroad work is that the psychological costs of leaving home outweighed the financial gains. The cultural factors influencing economic decision-making at Shonto were obvious, and Ruffing advocated for economic development strategies that followed social norms and values. By acknowledging the Navajo emphasis on the communal group and designing economic development programs to suit this cultural requirement (rather than forcing programs upon the people that were entrepreneurial in nature and incongruent with cultural values), Ruffing hypothesized that development would proceed more successfully than in the past.

Although Ruffing's analysis did not concern people with disabilities, her attention to the Navajo culture can inform VR as well as economic development. By examining the cultural norms of American Indian people, rehabilitation counselors can ascertain if there are cultural factors that should influence the choice of IWRP goals. Alternative goals, such as unpaid family worker and self-employment, may in fact be more suitable for people who share the Navajo social organization based on family groups.

Six employment options are recognized by RSA in the writing of IWRPs during the rehabilitation process. These options include: (a) sheltered workshops, (b) self-employment other than business enterprise programs (BEPs), (c) state agency and tribally-managed BEPs, (d) homemaker, (e) unpaid family worker, and (f) competitive employment. Each one of these options is considered as "work" for the purposes of vocational rehabilitation (RSA, 1995, p. 23), and is a viable employment closure under rehabilitation legislation that should be explored to discover the most appropriate situations for its use.

Sheltered Workshops (Extended Employment)

Extended employment (workshops) refers to work for wages or salary in a setting conducted by a nonprofit organization for persons with disabilities unable to enter into or not ready for competitive employment. Such settings are variously referred to as rehabilitation, community, curative, sheltered, industrial, or occupational workshops. Not everyone employed in an extended employment setting is necessarily in extended employment. Those who do not need sheltered work conditions but who are employed by the workshop in competitive placements such as office workers, janitors, etc., are considered competitively employed. Individuals are only classified as in extended employment if they *require* a sheltered environment in order to perform their work (RSA, 1995, pp. 24, 38).

Sheltered workshops provide a protected environment where a person with a disability can learn and work without the added difficulties presented by the competitive workplace (Rosen, Bussone, Dakunchak, & Cramp, 1993). Nelson (1971, cited in Murphy & Rogan, 1995, p. 8) argued that the concept of sheltered workshops was based, in part, on Judeo-Christian beliefs about the importance of the individual, personal choice, value of work, and the obligation of society to help those in need. This charitable intent fostered an organization based on protecting its clients from the perceived difficulties of the outside world (Rosen et al.).

The initial intent of sheltered workshops was to prove that people with disabilities could work and contribute to society, but the concept soon led to segregation of the very people it meant to integrate into the community. Murphy and Rogan (1995, p. 7)

reported that the primary participants in sheltered workshops are people with mental retardation, developmental disabilities, psychiatric disorders, sensory impairments, or multiple disabilities. For example, people with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, seizure disorders, or autism are often placed in sheltered workshops. Many people believe that this is the only place where individuals with severe disabilities are able to function effectively and safely.

Although the terms *sheltered employment* and *sheltered workshop* are sometimes used synonymously, sheltered employment may be characterized by the expansion of sheltered services to community employment settings, including work crews or enclaves. These are groups of workers with disabilities located in community work settings who typically earn subminimum wages and receive significant agency supervision (Murphy & Rogan, 1995, p. 5–6).

Several positive end results can be obtained through participation in a sheltered workshop program. One is the development of skills necessary to make the transition from the workshop into an integrated work setting. Sheltered workshops may include transitional services such as pre-employment training, work adjustment, job placement, and time-limited employment services (Parent, Hill, & Wehman, 1989). Bellamy, Rhodes, Mank, and Albin (1988) included other types of services along with sheltered workshops in the steps towards integrated employment, such as work-activity and day-activity programs. They noted, however, that the goal of moving people through a continuum of services in hopes of finally attaining full integration has met with little success. Bellamy, Rhodes, Bourbeau, and Mank (1986, cited in Parent et al.) showed that only 12% of sheltered workshop participants completed the transition into integrated work environments. Only 3% maintained this status for more than two years. Another positive result of a sheltered workshop program is for the worker to remain permanently employed within the segregated environment (Bellamy et al., 1988; Murphy & Rogan, 1995).

One main criticism of the sheltered workshops is their inability to place people in integrated work settings. This inability was more specifically targeted by Schuster (1990) and Greenleigh Associates (1975, cited in Rosen et al., 1993). They discussed, for example, the lack of rehabilitation and employment outcomes, a decline in the

availability of jobs using the skills taught in the workshops, and an inability to move people through the continuum from sheltered to integrated employment. On the other hand, Kern (1994) has argued:

> Sheltered workshops are becoming increasingly successful in securing contracts of increasing size and complexity. Production quotas and deadlines often make it possible for the workshop to employ people who are nondisabled to work alongside people with disabilities. Such integration is increasingly the rule rather than the exception (p. 23).

The integrity of the work performed in the workshops is also a target of criticism; Wehman and Kregel have claimed that people in the workshops spend a "lifetime of performing meaningless work for inconsequential wages" (1995, p. 286). Mallas described the negative image of workshops as a place for the "unwanted cast-off goods and people" (1976, cited in Rosen et al., 1993, p. 31). Mallas, along with Greenleigh Associates (1975, cited in Rosen et al.), also questioned the business procedures of the administration and the skill and training of the staff members. However, "Mallas argued for a changing attitude toward workshops as a valued and appropriate employment resource, rather than merely as a last resort for placement" (Rosen et al., p. 31).

The substandard wages paid to sheltered workers have been criticized as perpetuating society's devaluation of people with disabilities (Schuster, 1990, cited in Rosen et al., 1993). As Kern (1994) has pointed out:

> Most responsible workshops have responded to this criticism, however, and wage rates are increasing. . . . Secondly, it should be noted that the sheltered workshop certificate that allows workshops to pay the same rate of pay for similar work based on the individual worker's productivity provides opportunity for people who would not otherwise have the chance to work (pp. 22-23).

In summary, Kern (1994) argued:

> The reality that sheltered workshops are no longer considered "politically correct" does not negate the real need they meet for some people with disabilities, nor the

fact that sheltered employment is the stated preference/choice of some workers and families (p. 22).

For American Indians and Alaska Natives, the suitability of the sheltered workshop option remains largely unexplored, especially in view of new alternatives that seem more appropriate. Although no literature specific to the experience of American Indians and Alaska Natives analyzing the effectiveness of sheltered workshops could be found, sheltered workshops are an option for an IWRP. They have been used frequently in some places, such as Toyei Industries, Inc.[1] and Coyote Canyon Rehabilitation Center[2] on the Navajo Reservation.

Another example is the industrial laundromat established in 1990 by the Navajo Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Tuba City, Arizona with financial assistance from an Arizona RSA establishment grant. This laundromat provided training to VR clients (Powers, 1991). In 1993, four VR clients were hired as laundry workers, and contracts were obtained with five businesses in Tuba City. A revolving account was established to operate the laundry, and plans were being made to contract with the Indian Health Service (IHS), which would make the project autonomous (Roanhorse, 1993). In conjunction with independent living (IL) programs, these settings can provide the kind of sheltered working environment that some clients may need to succeed (e.g., Streissguth, LaDue, & Randels, 1988).

Supported Employment

Sheltered work environments, whether they are the almshouse-workhouses of the 19th century or the sheltered workshops of the 20th century, have inspired criticism by some since their inception. With the passage of the Education of All Children Act of

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[1] Toyei Industries, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation near Ganado, AZ that has been in operation since 1977. The Navajo Tribal Council granted it a corporate charter in 1979, acknowledging it as "a Navajo Tribal entity." It provides residential and group home living services, day treatment program services, and other social services (Toyei Industries, n.d.).

[2] Coyote Canyon Rehabilitation Center (Brimhall, NM) was established in 1972, and currently provides both sheltered workshop placements and supported employment. About 95% of their clients are residential. Besides working on site, their workers commute to various communities in the eastern part of the Navajo Nation, providing janitorial and other services (MacDonald Avery, personal communication, February 25, 1999).

1975, people have advocated for the same free and appropriate opportunities in the workplace that the Act guarantees in education (Parent et al., 1989), including supported employment. Supported employment is defined as paid work in an integrated setting in which the individual receives ongoing public support at the job site after placement (Bellamy et al., 1988; Parent et al.).

As an alternative to sheltered workshops, some members of the rehabilitation community recommend providing programs that emphasize supported employment. Supported employment can be provided either in competitive or noncompetitive job placements. Bellamy and others (1988) have described three developments in thinking that led to the advent of supported employment as an alternative to sheltered workshops: the realization that people with disabilities are able and willing to perform productive work, the understanding that people with disabilities benefit from involvement with people without disabilities, and the demonstration that some people with disabilities need ongoing public support. Historically, only nonvocational services provided ongoing support, and most opportunities were segregated. In response to the perceived inadequacies of the existing VR service system, supported employment was created and defined as paid employment of at least 20 hours per week in integrative settings with ongoing public support.

Supported employment began receiving attention in the mid-1980s, when it was developed in response to the segregation created by sheltered workshops. The initial federal recognition of supported employment came in 1984 when it was defined by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the 34 CFR 373 (Bellamy et al., 1988). The Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984 also codified supported employment as a priority. The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1986 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1986 (PL 99-506) both refer to supported employment as a valid rehabilitation outcome (Bellamy et al.). Supported employment differs from traditional vocational rehabilitation services primarily in its requirement of long-term, ongoing support for the working individual. Traditional services emphasized prevocational job skill preparation, whereas supported employment provides on-the-job

training and support. In fact, prevocational services may be completely *absent* from supported employment (National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, 1987).

Despite dramatic gains from 1985 to 1995, the supported employment movement lost much of its early momentum. Additionally, the national system of activity centers and sheltered workshops remains largely intact. This implies that for some, sheltered workshops remain a viable and satisfactory placement outcome. Wehman and Kregel (1995) lamented:

> If left unaddressed, funding pressures and programmatic obstacles will confine supported employment to marginal status as a small, optional program that continues to be dwarfed by our nation's entrenched network of workshops and activity centers (p. 287).

Wehman and Kregel, therefore proposed four challenges as central to future attempts to implement fully the idea of integrated employment (which includes competitive employment as well as supported employment): (a) Convert day programs to integrated employment, (b) increase program capacity, (c) expand consumer choice and self-determination, and (d) promote meaningful employment outcomes (p. 288). Another option, to be considered below, is community rehabilitation programs.

Least Restrictive Environment

The principle of least restrictive environment (LRE) is used by some to further differentiate supported employment from traditional services. LRE purports that an individual should be placed in the most inclusive environment possible, based on his or her particular disabling condition (Abery & Fahnestock, 1994; National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, 1987). Wehman and Kregel (1992) emphasized the importance of assessing the integrative potential of a possible supported employment placement. Abery and Fahnestock (1994), however, cited Taylor (1988), who cautioned that, although inclusion is desirable, using the LRE principle may, in fact, lead to greater segregation. He gives seven reasons why LRE may not be the most desirable framework: First, it implies that, in some cases, segregation is desirable. Second, LRE associates

intensive services with increased segregation rather than evaluating service needs on a case-by-case basis. Third, LRE is based on a "readiness model" which assumes that people must earn the right to move to a less restricted environment. Fourth, the framework empowers professional counselors and leads to decisions based on their values rather than on the preferences of the clients. Fifth, LRE may limit basic rights to freedom and community participation. Sixth, LRE may impose undesired movement or change on people with disabilities, forcing them to move to a less restrictive environment and destroying any sense of permanency they had developed in their present occupational environment. Finally, the focus of LRE is mainly on the physical setting rather than services provided to people in that setting. Taylor argues that a new framework must be developed that overcomes these barriers and facilitates the integration of people into their communities and the development and maintenance of relationships with other members of that community.

Community-Based Rehabilitation

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) received major impetus under the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Community-based rehabilitation consists of:

> Rehabilitation processes that are brought together to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency and community integration goals. The processes that are applied . . . are used to ensure that the achieved improvements in personal and vocational status are likely to be long-lasting. . . . The emphasis within the processes that are included under community-based rehabilitation is that the specific process(es) are provided in settings where they will most likely be used and where acquisition of the information or skills is most likely to be valid or applicable outside the rehabilitation experience (Menz, Coker, Thomas, Botterbusch, & McAlees, 1997, p. 183).

Community-based rehabilitation may provide many options, including supported employment and IL. It has received international attention from three United Nations

agencies: International Labor Organization (ILO); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and the World Health Organization (WHO), as a

> . . . strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, and social integration of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people themselves, their families, and communities, and the appropriate health, education vocational, and social services (WHO, 1994, cited in Rodgers, 1999).

CBR differs from IL in that the entire community is the target of CBR programs. The CBR model is one of community development or partnership. With IL ideology, it places control squarely with consumers with disabilities (Rodgers, 1999). CBR is included here because the concept may be of particular interest for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and because community-based rehabilitation may include alternatives to competitive employment as a kind of supported employment.

RSA defines *community rehabilitation programs* (CRPs) (RSA, 1995, p. 37) as

> . . . programs providing services directly or facilitating the provision of services to individuals to help them overcome the disabling effects of their impairment, and to maximize their opportunities for employment, including advancement.

Some tribal VR programs are experimenting with these approaches:

> Some of the programs that run CRPs include Eastern Cherokee in NC, Choctaw of MS, Zuni of NM, and Sho-Ban of ID; Lummi of WA is just getting started with a restaurant. There is a difference in the way the CRPs are managed. I think Eastern Cherokee is managed by a subsidiary of the Tribe. I think Choctaw of MS is administered by the VR agency. Zuni is managed by a non-profit corporation that also administers the VR program. Sho-Ban of ID has tried running the CRP by the VR agency and then by a non-profit. Lummi of WA, the VR agency will likely run the cafeteria (Richard Corbridge, personal communication, April 6, 1999).

Self-Employment

Another alternative IWRP goal is self-employment. According to RSA (1995),

> This refers to work for profit or fees in one's own business, farm, shop, or office. Superintendents, managers, and other executives hired to manage a business or farm, officers of corporations, and persons working for sales commissions should not be classified under this code, but under Code 1 (competitive employment). "Self-employment" includes sharecroppers, but not wage earners on farms (p. 24).

Uditsky, Sannuto, and Waters (1996) have presented self-employment as an option in response to the decreasing success and enthusiasm for supported employment for people with disabilities. Reiter, Friedman, and Goldman (1995) agreed that supported employment is not the only method of rehabilitation that should be considered. They have suggested that self-employment is an important option for people with disabilities, stating that there exists "an untapped source of possible entrepreneurs in this population, new businessmen and women. Indeed, they have a right to access the same opportunities as non-disabled people" (p. 258). Two case studies, the Self-Employment Pilot Project (Uditsky et al.) and AVHA desktop publishing (Reiter et al.) support the authors' claims that self-employment provides opportunities for entrepreneurial success to people with disabilities.

According to Arnold and Seekins (1994), even with such examples of its successful implementation, self-employment is not used as often as would be expected in VR. They studied the nationwide use of self-employment rehabilitation closures and found that 34 states have policies on self-employment. Only three of the states with policies had positive statements about the use of self-employment as an employment outcome; for example, stating that it fosters independence, allows the consumer to be productive, and allows the counselors to be creative in designing IWRP goals. The remaining 31 states placed restrictions on the use of self-employment, requiring that it be used as a last resort or be reserved for people with the most severe disabilities. Eleven states pointed out potential hazards to the consumer in writing a self-employment IWRP goal such as the emotional and financial impact of failure, hard work, long hours, and low

potential income. Critics also lament the high cost of self-employment placements ($3122 versus $1939 working for someone else).

Arnold and Seekins (1994) countered the negative images of self-employment by advancing the position that self-employment is a suitable option for specific situations, especially people in rural areas who cannot access traditional employment venues. In rural areas where wages are low and jobs are scarce, self-employment may be a viable option, one that is already being used more often in these situations. Using this logic, it seems reasonable that self-employment could be encouraged for American Indians residing on reservations or in other rural areas. For this reason, Schacht and Minkler (1991, p. 101) recommended that "training programs promoting the goal of self-employment should be developed or enhanced, and publicized" for American Indians. States such as New Mexico are already using self-employment more than other states, a fact attributed to the high number of Native craftspeople there (Wayne Oyenque, personal communication, 1998). Most tribal VR programs have established self-employment ventures with their clients (Richard Corbridge, personal communication, April 6, 1999).

Because of zoning policies regarding commercial enterprises, it has been difficult to establish medium-sized businesses on Indian reservations (e.g., Gilbreath, 1973). Therefore, small-scale, home-based enterprises that do not require a business lease may be easier to establish. Home-based employment is an option not only for able-bodied, rural or reservation-dwelling people, but also for individuals with disabilities living in those areas. The self-employment option as an IWRP goal, then, could be more economically feasible than competitive employment in rural or reservation settings.

Seekins (1997) explained that self-employment suffers from a lack of viability as an employment outcome and, in conjunction with the Rehabilitation and Training Center on Rural Rehabilitation and the Self-Employment Initiative Group, suggested changes in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that would afford heightened awareness and use of the self-employment option. The goal of the proposed changes is for self-employment and supported employment to be equally viable employment options for people with disabilities. Seekins' comments advocated a shift in thinking about self-employment to a framework that enhances its acceptability as an employment outcome.

This shift in thinking could particularly benefit American Indian clients living in rural reservation communities where standard competitive employment options do not exist or only exist in limited numbers.

Business Enterprise Programs

The business enterprise programs (BEP) concept began as a program of the 1936 Randolph-Sheppard Act that provided priority-vending opportunities for persons who are legally blind in federal buildings. In non-tribal contexts, a BEP is managed by the state agency, and is defined as:

> . . . vending stands and other small businesses operated by persons with severe disabilities under the management and supervision of a State agency. It includes home industry, farming, and other enterprises. Home industry involves work performed under the management and supervision of a State agency in the client's own home or residence for wages or salary on a piece-rate, hourly, weekly, or monthly basis. Such employment may be engaged in by persons capable of activity outside the home, as well as by homebound persons (RSA, 1995, p. 24).

The vending opportunities can be gum and magazine type operations or a series of vending machines or full cafeteria operations. Most states have a modified version of the Randolph-Sheppard law that includes the priority in state buildings. The priority is for persons who are blind or severely disabled.

In addition, and closest associated to BEPs, the authority in Title I of the Rehabilitation Act provides for state-managed "small business enterprises" (Richard Corbridge, personal communication, March 20, 1998; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(5), reprinted in Appendix A). These small business enterprises were intended to include "individuals with the most severe disabilities" (see Appendix A). By extension, tribal VR programs could also establish such programs. Although no literature could be found on the use of BEPs by American Indians and Alaska Natives, stories about specific tribal business endeavors to benefit persons with disabilities are not uncommon.

Homemaker

Homemaker refers to men and women whose activity is keeping house for their families or for themselves, if they live alone (RSA, 1995, p. 24). The Chickasaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program defines the homemaker alternative to competitive employment as follows:

> Homemaking may be an appropriate occupation for any client, man or woman. A homemaker is defined as a person whose primary work is performance of duties related to the upkeep and maintenance of a home. This work takes place in the individual's own home, without remuneration.
>
> (A) The IWRP can have a vocational objective of homemaker only when services will directly and substantially improve the individual's ability to perform the primary homemaking work activities for their home. Evidence of substantial contributions to the home include relieving another household member of primary homemaking duties in order to engage in remunerative employment, or increasing the client's or other household member's ability to care for a dependent child or disabled adult in the home.
>
> (B) Self-care activities are not sufficient to meet the definition of gainful occupation. The individual must not be receiving any type of assistance in providing primary homemaking duties.
>
> (C) A vocational objective of homemaker can be established for only one person within the same household (Gayla Callaway, personal communication, June 19, 1998).

This alternative to competitive employment has not received much attention in vocational rehabilitation, and no literature could be found relating to the success or failure of such placements, among either American Indians and Alaska Natives or elsewhere.

Unpaid Family Worker

Unpaid family worker refers to persons who work without pay on a family farm or in a family business (RSA, 1995, p. 25). The Chickasaw Nation Vocational

Rehabilitation Program defines the unpaid family worker alternative to competitive employment as follows:

> A vocational objective of unpaid family worker is appropriate when services will enable the individual to perform work without pay on a family farm or in a family business operated by one or more members of the client's family. The record must document how the services will substantially improve the productivity of the client and his or her contribution to the family farm or business (Gayla Callaway, personal communication, June 19, 1998).

The authors could not find in the literature any systematic attempt to find out how this option was working for American Indians or Alaska Natives.

Working for Pay In-kind

RSA also has several work status categories considered "Not working." These include students, trainees or workers (non-competitive employment), and "other." The "other" category includes six subcategories, one of which is "persons receiving only pay in-kind (meals, lodgings, etc.)" (RSA, 1995, p. 25). The fact that this is classified as "not working" reveals a cultural bias of the majority culture that does not recognize the validity and significance of in-kind payments in some tribal cultures.

The category "trainees or workers (non-competitive employment)" refers to:

> . . . persons who, although they may have received stipends during the week before application for rehabilitation for work or services performed, were functioning essentially in a non-competitive environment. This code should be used mainly for persons participating in work experience, work training, or work adjustment programs (RSA, 1995, p. 25).

If this category includes apprentice work, then it again fails to recognize the validity and significance of work roles in some tribal cultures. For example, an apprentice to a medicine man or tribal healer might fall into one of these categories.

METHODS

Tracking National Data on IWRP Goals

All employment categories are recorded in annual RSA databases under the headings *Work Status at Referral*, *IWRP Goal*, and *Work Status at Closure*. By analyzing reports provided by the RSA database, it is possible to track the utilization of these categories for American Indian and Alaska Native people and determine the degree to which each option is utilized by state VR programs in the vocational rehabilitation of American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities. Due to the autonomy of tribal VR programs, analogous data from these programs must be obtained from each tribe and are not available from the national RSA databases.

Quantitative Data

State VR Data

Data were collected in 1997 from the RSA national database for FY 1996 on the employment outcomes of American Indians. [RSA collected data from each state vocational rehabilitation agency with the year-end 911 form.] These data contained information on the work status at referral, IWRP goals, and work status at closure for any American Indian or Alaska Native rehabilitated by state programs. Again, tribal VR programs were not represented in this database.

The research design called for the analysis of RSA data and the identification of trends in the utilization of employment goals other than competitive employment. Five states were to be identified as model programs, operationally defined as those using an alternative to competitive employment at a rate higher than the rest of the United States. Rehabilitation offices would then be contacted in each of these five states to verify the statistics from RSA and to establish dialogue with the counselors or administrators involved in the alternative placements.

A preliminary phone survey was designed for use with the VR programs in each of these five states. A contact person was selected and asked questions regarding the use of alternative employment placements in that state. This information was recorded and used to compare with the statistical data from RSA regarding the use of alternative employment goals. Key informants were identified through conversations with the

contact person at each site. These key informants were then contacted and asked to participate in more formal interviews. VR counselors were included as potential key informants (see Appendix B). Occasionally, the contact person also served as a key informant.

Initially, the researchers intended to distribute a more formal written questionnaire to VR counselors. This questionnaire was designed to identify model programs within the VR system that successfully used alternatives to competitive employment. After a careful examination of the statistical data from RSA, however, the need for a formal questionnaire-type survey became unnecessary, as this would duplicate the data already collected by RSA. The VR counselors' time would be better utilized through participation in semi-structured, qualitative interviews rather than collecting quantifiable data that was already available through the federal agency.

Tribal VR Data

Because tribal VR data are not reported in the national RSA statistics, a letter was sent to each tribal VR project (as identified in the 1997-98 AIRRTC Directory of Tribal VR Projects) asking for placement statistics for the past year ("Section 130 [now 121]" signifies tribal VR programs and is based on the legislation language that authorizes projects). Statistics were requested for each closure option, divided into male and female placements in each category. Because tribal VR programs are not bound by all the same regulations as state programs, the letter also requested information on how "past year" was defined by the program (see Appendix C). These data were analyzed using the same procedure as the state data analysis, selecting five model programs based on the frequency with which they used the alternative placement goals.

Qualitative Data

Key informants (VR counselors and other staff) were selected from all model sites or states based on their familiarity with the alternative placement categories. The sampling technique was based on a snowball, convenience sample because the entire population size was small and the community networks were relatively integrated. Focus group-style conference calls were conducted with these counselors in each tribal or state

VR program. A semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D) was followed initially. As each focus group progressed, however, the participants often anticipated questions not yet asked, making it unnecessary to formally ask those questions later. When it was impossible to convene a conference call, individual counselors were interviewed using the same interview format. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, consisted of 18 open-ended questions (see Appendix D), were tape-recorded, and transcribed for analysis using the software program NUD*IST [Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing] (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1997).

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

State VR Data

Data were obtained from RSA on work status at closure for FY 1996, as summarized in Table 1 (Barry Connors, personal communication, November 24, 1997).

The alternative to competitive employment reported most often by American Indians and non-Indians alike was the homemaker placement. However, this placement was reported for American Indians at an even higher rate (7.2%) than non-Indians (6.9%). The greatest difference was in the unpaid family worker category (5.5% of American Indian closures vs. 1.7% of non-Indian closures). This was the second most common alternative to competitive employment among American Indians (see below), compared with non-Indians, for whom it was the fourth most common alternative. Self-employment closures were also more common among American Indian VR clients (4%) than among non-Indian clients (2.6%). However, sheltered workshops were slightly more common among non-Indian clients (3.9%) than with American Indian clients (3.5%). Business enterprise programs were rarely used by anyone, but non-Indians (0.15%) used this placement about twice as often as American Indians (0.06%).

Table 1
Work Status at Closure (FY 1996)

	Male		Female		Total	
Employment Category	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
American Indian						
Competitive	779	80.6	580	78.5	1,359	79.70
Homemaker	44	4.6	78	10.6	122	7.20
Unpaid Family Worker	58	6.0	36	4.9	94	5.50
Self-Employed	46	4.8	23	3.1	69	4.00
Sheltered Workshop	39	4.0	21	2.8	60	3.50
Business Enterprise	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.06
Total	966	100.0	739	100.0	1,705	100.0
Non-Indian						
Competitive	102,262	87.8	77,281	80.9	179,543	84.70
Homemaker	3,951	3.4	10,674	11.2	14,625	6.90
Unpaid Family Worker	1,941	1.7	1,765	1.8	3,706	1.70
Self-Employed	3,469	3.0	2,074	2.2	5,543	2.60
Sheltered Workshop	4,654	4.0	3,671	3.8	8,325	3.90
Business Enterprise	220	0.2	89	0.1	309	0.15
Total	116,497	100.0	95,554	100.0	212,051	100.0

Note. % in Total column = 100% due to rounding

Researchers looked to see which states used these alternatives for American Indian clients the most. The state with the largest number of American Indian homemaker closures was Oklahoma, credited with more than half (65/122) of all such closures nationwide. When contacted by AIRRTC researchers, an Oklahoma state VR office administrator wrote:

> Our recent evaluations by RSA have suggested to us that we need to reduce our overall number of homemaker closures to become more in line with the national

> average. As a result, I have been working with my staff so that they can reduce the total number of homemaker closures. We have encouraged them to focus on competitive employment since that is the standard that both the congress and the RSA have called for. We are in agreement that competitive employment is the most appropriate option for our activities. We continue to offer homemaker closures, however, we are encouraging counselors to consider all options before settling on that. It was our experience that there are occasions when individuals may choose to settle for that option rather than pursuing the more appropriate, but difficult option, of competitive employment. In 1996, we were roughly 30% homemaker closures, we are currently at about 15% homemaker closures, and we hope to get fewer than 10% in the near future (Michael O'Brien, personal communication, June 3, 1998)

The state with the largest number of unpaid family worker placements was Alaska, with eight. The Alaska state VR program was then chosen as the target state for information about unpaid family worker placements. The largest number of self-employed placements (work status at closure) was in New Mexico, where 21 such cases were reported. The state office confirmed these data; thus, New Mexico was identified as the model state VR program for self-employment placements. The largest number of sheltered workshop placements, with 18, was in Minnesota. When contacted, the state office confirmed the data; thus, Minnesota was identified as the model state VR program for sheltered workshop placements for American Indians. The only BEP placement of an American Indian anywhere in the United States was of a woman in South Carolina who was blind.

However, these data must be interpreted with caution. RSA may report just one vocational outcome at closure, when in reality several goals are in process simultaneously. If both competitive goals and self-employment goals are achieved, which is the one that gets reported by RSA? One counselor referred to this ambiguity in data collection when asked about the totals reported by RSA for various work statuses at closure:

I may use more than one vocational goal. I mean RSA might just get one. Our bean counters might just decide to pick one of those goals and report that so I can't speak from what RSA reads. But for me, writing the IWRP for the consumer, I may have more than one vocational goal and one may be a competitive goal and one may be a self-employment goal and one might pertain to gathering resources or what we might call subsistence. Then I may have an objective on the IWRP for each one of those, or something that addresses each of those and ties it all together.

This counselor's comments serve as a reminder that closure data do not always present a completely accurate picture of client goals that are achieved, and that it is necessary to be careful when making assumptions about what data may represent.

In summary, the model programs identified through the RSA data for further investigation were New Mexico (21 self-employment placements), Minnesota (18 sheltered workshop placements), and Alaska (8 unpaid family worker placements). While Oklahoma had 65 homemaker closures, it might be questioned whether they would serve as a model program because they were attempting to reduce their use of the homemaker status.

Tribal VR (Section 121) Data

Letters of inquiry along with a one-page data form (see Appendix C) were sent to each of the 39 tribal VR programs listed on the AIRRTC 1997-98 roster of such programs. Follow-up calls were made to most of the non-responding programs after a few weeks. In all, 18 programs responded, and the results are shown in Table 2. Because the tribal VR programs are mostly small (and because the largest one did not respond), for the process of data collection, it seemed best to target groups of programs that had a common emphasis in specific alternatives to competitive employment, rather than designating single programs.

The two noncompetitive work statuses at closure receiving the largest number of client placements were self-employment and tribal BEPs. Thirty-eight clients were reported in each of these work statuses, each accounting for 13% of all placements. The four tribal VR programs placing the largest percentage of their clients in BEPs were the

Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (Idaho), the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Montana), and Stillaquamish InterTribal (Washington). Each of these reported placing at least 25% of their clients in business enterprise

Table 2

Types of Employment Reported by Tribal VR Programs

	Competitive Employment		Alternatives to Competitive Employment						Total
Tribal VR Project	N	%	SUP	SHW	SEL	BEP	HMK	UFW	
1. Apache Tribe (OK)	29	48%	3		8	15	5	1	61
2. Bristol Bay	3	75%			1				4
3. Cherokee (Eastern)	2	50%	1	1					4
4. Cherokee Nation (OK)	8	67%			1	2	1		12
5. Chickasaw	8	62%			1	2	2		13
6. Choctaw (MS Band)	32	89%	3				1		36
7. Choctaw Nation (OK)	13	72%			1	1	3		18
8. Colville Confederated	27	87%			4				31
9. Fort Peck Tribes	10	100%							10
10. Ft. Belknap Tribes	3	33%	4		2				9
11. Iowa Tribe (OK)	11	65%			2		4		17
12. Oglala Sioux Tribe	3	100%							3
13. Salish / Kootenai Confed.		0%		1	1	4			6
14. Shoshone-Bannock	16	44%			8	11	1		36
15. Stillaquamish Intertribal	2	33%			1	3		6	12
16. Tanana Chief's Confer.	4	44%			4		1		9
17. Tlingit & Haida Tribes	7	64%			4				11
18. Yakima Tribe	8	89%	1						9
Total	186		12	2	38	38	18	7	301
% of all placements		62%	4%	.7%	13%	13%	6%	2.3%	100%

Legend:

SUP = Supported Employment **SHW** = Sheltered Workshop **SEL** = Self-Employment

BEP = Business Enterprise Program **HMK** = Home Maker **UFW** = Unpaid Family Worker

programs. These tribal VR programs were contacted, and at least one VR counselor was recruited from each to serve as key informant in a focus group conducted through a conference call.

The five tribes reporting the largest percentage of clients placed in self-employment were the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (Idaho), the Colville Confederated Tribes (Washington), the Tanana Chiefs Conference (Alaska), and the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. Each of these reported placing at least 13% of their clients in this work status at closure.

The next largest category of placements was in homemaker status (6% of all placements). Most of these were tribes from Oklahoma, the state reporting the highest number of state VR closures in homemaker status. In fact, all tribes reporting more than one case closed in homemaker status were from Oklahoma. Counselors who had experience with such placements in these tribes were therefore recruited to serve as key informants in a focus group conducted through a conference call.

Qualitative Results

Based on the quantitative results outlined above, focus groups via conference call were organized to explore what state and tribal VR programs were doing to successfully implement IWRPs using alternatives to competitive employment. The focus group format was semi-structured, beginning with the questions listed in Appendix D. Although each focus group was geared to better understanding a particular type of alternative to competitive employment, discussions ranged to other alternatives, as well as to competitive employment. Quotes from the transcripts have been minimally edited to delete redundant or extraneous material, and in a few cases to clarify the meaning. However, the authors have attempted to minimize this editing in order to let the participants speak in their own voices as much as possible.

Development of Employment Goals

Regarding the general VR approach to the development of employment goals, one participant commented on the steps taken before developing a plan for employment:

What we do here is give them the thorough diagnostic study like we are supposed to. This will help determine where they are going to be, because you are appraising their ability, their intelligence level, their educational achievement, their work experience, personal location and social assessment, learning opportunity, educational skills, and all of that stuff. Even some of the sheltered workshops, so to speak, or community rehabilitation programs won't take people that do not fit in with them. Like you get a violent person and they will not allow them in there. You have to take them and get them treated first. All of this is taken into account before we even focus on anything like [a plan for employment].

Almost all staff agreed that one of the most important considerations in determining employment goals was the client's choice. They also talked about the importance of assessments and understanding the client's abilities. This was thought to be essential for avoiding unrealistic goals, and setting the client up for failure. It was noted that a goal for competitive employment might be unrealistic in one case, and in another case a self-employment business plan might be unrealistic.

Self-Employment

When and Why it is Used

Generally speaking, self-employment was considered a more viable option when transportation was limited. But, besides transportation, other problems associated with rural areas were often cited as reasons for considering the goal of self-employment. The biggest problem was, of course, the lack of available jobs. Also, in remote areas, supported employment options may be just as limited as competitive employment options. As one counselor put it,

The only type of jobs where somebody can make money would be making arts or crafts. The other kinds of cultural aspects don't pay money. So, that's the only thing I can think of that . . . would be based on their cultural heritage . . . if they were looking for employment to make income.

In other words, having self-employment as a goal may call for extremely creative approaches and entrepreneurial skills if counselors and clients deem arts and crafts to be unsuitable for a particular client.

Some counselors and staff noted that health problems are often a consideration in opting for self-employment. Some employers can ill afford to bear the burden of employees who need to take frequent breaks due to the nature of their health problems. These clients will be more likely to consider self-employment. Staff interviewees mentioned that clients who have been injured or who do not get along well with others may need to work alone in a self-employment context. Often clients with greater physical limitations want to keep their income from SSI or SSDI, and supplement it with self-employment income. One staff person stated that 95% of their clients with self-employment goals lived on subsistence income such as SSI, and most were severely disabled. Another counselor made the same point:

> *For severely disabled people who are living on the reservation and are going to continue living on the reservation, I think that self-employment is a very viable option for them and one that has to get looked at. Again, I'm not speaking of this necessarily as subcompetitive or anything like that. I'm certainly talking about that as a competitive placement. But self-employment might be more viable for them, a cottage industry or home industry kind of thing, just because of the severity of the disability and the lack of facility options.*

However, another counselor in Minnesota had a different view of self-employment. He explained how it is different from supported or sheltered employment in that clients usually need to have specialized abilities that are above average:

> *Self-employment, I think, would be a little bit different because you'd probably be looking at an average to above average ability there. I mean you want somebody that has the ability to manage his or her own employment. There have been a couple of cases of . . . American Indian caseloads in the last year where there were actual business plans written up for self-employment where there was a fairly substantial expenditure for equipment or tools or something of that sort.*

But there are some other people who maybe become a self-employed handy man or something. . . . Or maybe the ability isn't there but you still want to at least assess that they can run their lives.

Yet another Minnesota counselor made a similar point. She discussed the difference between "true self-employment" in which someone has his or her own business and is fully self-supporting, versus "cottage industries" such as arts and crafts which barely supplement one's income. A VR counselor in New Mexico summarized why self-employment was used at his office:

We generally try to work with the client, with what the client is able to do and wants to do. But, as far as our supervisors and our manual, they prefer competitive employment. A lot of times we are locked in areas where competitive employment would be completely out for this person, due to transportation, family problems, [or] health problems, and those are the types that we end up using some of these other programs. Other times, these people make more money doing this kind of work, than they would doing competitive employment, so that is another reason that I use it, when I can see that they are going to make more money in less time in the job that they don't have to have a boss. There are several reasons that we use these. It is not just "we can't find a job," or the person can't read, or something like this. There are a lot of reasons we use self-employment.

The comments of all these counselors illustrate the variety of situations, from classic textbook cases to creative individual scenarios that may fall under self-employment. One counselor described how the needs of the local business community helped to determine what area of self-employment a client should attempt:

One of the businesses we set up over here in Mescalero. They just opened up a sawmill and in order for them to have their chain saws sharpened or fixed they have to travel to Ruidoso or Alamagordo so we did set up a client and a business there in Mescalero where he could do that for them.

This case example falls on the "creative individual" side of the self-employment spectrum, as the local VR drew on local business needs to develop an employment opportunity.

Barriers

One barrier to self-employment is simply that some rehabilitation programs need to be better informed about how to make self-employment work, which points to the need for technical assistance for both state VR and tribal VR programs. As one participant suggested:

> *We are in our second year [as a tribal VR program] and we are beginning to look at the possibilities of how to initiate our consumers with self-employment. I think it is a little bit overwhelming and unsure about how to go about setting our consumers up in self-employment. As we begin to have more training on self-employment issues and things like that, where to go for resources—that helps. We all know what sheltered workshops are. I think the number one word for this program would be the unknown, fear of the unknown.*

The barrier this counselor notes is a lack of knowledge, not only on the part of consumers, but also on the part of counselors who inform the consumers. These are two different training issues of equal importance.

In Alaska, one counselor spoke about the difficulty they have implementing self-employment in conventional ways, which has led to experimenting with new ways on a smaller scale:

> *Self-employment has always been a tough one for us in Alaska to grapple with and most of us have just kind of shied away from it because in the past—the way we thought of self-employment has been a little more traditional, where we're helping a person set up a business or buy a business or start a business or buy a franchise. Something that may entail quite a bit of capital outlay and I think over the years, our agency has developed guidelines and forms to help us basically develop a full-blown business plan with a client. I've never really tended to get very involved with many of those; I've just never had them. The kinds of self-*

employment plans that I've gotten involved in are on a much smaller scale than that, that don't require so much. They've been more like the individual who is going to be running a service out of their home or the ivory carver out in the village or something like that where it's not so intensive.

Self-employment goals can vary widely, from supplementing disability income by selling craft items to establishing a lucrative business that can support a whole family. While self-employment does not have to be a small business, if establishing a business is the goal, one of the biggest barriers to self-employment is the initial capital that is often needed. The following comment was offered with respect to business enterprise programs, but it illustrates the problem of realizing the financial support to achieve a self-employment business goal:

We had one client here who wanted to start a pizza place. He had a building, owned the land, but nobody off the reservation is going to loan him any money—no banks or SBA [Small Business Administration] *or anybody. The tribe's not going to loan him any money either and we can't loan him any money. It's going to take probably $70,000 to $80,000 just to get the place ready for starting up and we don't have that kind of money.*

VR had helped clients establish their businesses with some initial funds, but counselors indicated reluctance to do so because, as one counselor mentioned, many new businesses fail in their first year. Occasionally, they had helped a client with a Small Business Administration loan application, which usually involves paperwork that few clients were able to prepare. Sometimes, not enough marketing research had been done to establish the viability of the enterprise.

Clients may get discouraged by any kind of roadblock, such as being required to develop a business plan or having to get a commercial license of some kind. These roadblocks also become barriers to self-employment. Several staff personnel talked about how the business plan required for an IWRP can be a hindrance because the paperwork is long and complex. A tribal VR project director described how self-employment placements often fall apart:

Self-employment, we're real interested in doing that. And we've sent several people through a system of trying to make that happen through helping them to write business plans and that sort of thing through the small business centers that we have at our community colleges. But we've never actually had that materialize either because somewhere along the line, the person decides it's not something they want to do. So we've never really had a self-employment placement I don't think.

There are many other barriers to self-employment that present a challenge to successful vocational placements. Several VR staff discussed the difficulties of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing regulations, which stipulate that clients cannot do business at home if they live in HUD-supported housing. Furthermore, the clients may have only a very small market that makes it hard to sell enough of their merchandise or services. Another barrier often mentioned is a lack of bookkeeping and record management skills. One staff person suggested that hiring an accounting professional to teach clients how to do their bookkeeping may be part of the solution.

Examples of Successful Cases and Strategies

Many of the staff participants mentioned that clients often know nothing about marketing and usually have few resources to help them in this area. The VR counselors in New Mexico have found a solution for many of their clients. They assisted self-employed craftspeople in helping each other with group marketing efforts and teaming up to sell their merchandise at the same time and location. The counselors helped one client learn how to develop Web pages so he can advertise on the Internet for several other clients who were self-employed in arts and craft skills.

VR policy typically has certain requirements for the self-employment option. For example, the IWRP must include a business plan that the client can understand and agree with. Counselors said their cases varied in how complicated the business plans were and how much assistance was given to clients in developing them:

For instance, we have one gentleman who has strong banking background and business background and he suffered a stroke a few years ago and we actually

contracted with a small business agency to help him work up a business plan for consulting. So, it depends on the degree and the amount of complexity to the plan. But, yeah, all along the way no matter what . . . we are supportive and in the end we assist them in mapping out what they want to do.

The flexibility of support exemplified by this counselor seems typical of the help that many clients receive.

Often, clients may have limited literacy in reading and writing and are unable to formulate plans for themselves. A New Mexico VR counselor explained how he got around this limitation to enable the success of his clients:

Generally for the people at the pueblo, I do it myself because some of them do not read and write too well and if I ask them to do it themselves they will give me two or three little sentences and then my supervisor will not approve that. I make one, have them read it, have somebody who is with them that knows how to read well, read it with them and see if they agree with it and then they sign it. We have to have at least three to four pages. . . .

The process outlined here took additional time on the part of the counselor and reading assistants, and indicated their strong commitment to their clients.

One staff person mentioned that whenever a client's case is closed with self-employment, it is a good idea to maintain contact with that client to determine if there is continued success and to see if the case file needs to be reopened at some point. Maintenance of self-employment in each case is an individual matter, as one counselor emphasized with the following illustration:

I had a lady who had a heart transplant and she has been working for three years now, doing her own thing. Nobody would even look at her as far as giving her a job on account of insurance and liability problems. . . . She is able to work an hour and then take an hour to rest, work for four hours and rest for four days. It is an individual thing.

The individual nature of each case sometimes makes categorization difficult. An Alaska counselor looked at each case situation to deal creatively with employment goals

and closure statuses. He dealt with the ambiguity of employment categories in the following way:

> *Here's what I think the difference is. Not in every case, but in some of the cases, what we're doing is not meant to be income, not like you or I would need to survive. Where it's meant to supplement to some degree someone's subsistence lifestyle, I think you can draw the line. It still is to some degree, I mean you could call it a self-employment plan. In fact, we have had people develop self-employment plans . . ., individuals we're working with that this income alone would be enough to sustain them. They're not expecting that it is, we're not expecting that it is. In other words, it's just another component to that subsistence lifestyle. So if I were doing a self-employment plan with somebody who's living in Juneau, who has a family to support, they're not involved in any kind of subsistence activities, and they came up with a similar kind of plan, it probably wouldn't fly.*

This counselor sometimes found categorization difficult because clients with a subsistence lifestyle could be categorized as either self-employment, or unpaid family worker. On the data collection form (see Appendix C), the question was asked, "If the closure categories used by your agency are not the same as the ones used above, or you have unique interpretations of the categories, please explain." One tribal VR counselor responded that **self-employment occupations included subsistence activities** (e.g., trapping, beading, selling wood, and sled building). Another participant wrote:

> *Self-employment is how we categorized two successful outcomes but both clients started home-based businesses. This required less than a $750 investment per client and the results were immediate.*

The successes described by these counselors, who stretch the traditional definitions of self-employment from the owning, operating, and managing of his/her own business as described by Arnold & Seekins (1994) to the subsistence activities mentioned above, were counter-balanced by a few failures, as another participant reported:

> Tried self-business development, but they didn't work well. Seasonal and no market—only intended for other Native people and ceremonial use.

Sheltered Workshops

The state with the largest number of sheltered workshop placements was Minnesota. When asked to comment about this, Allan Lunz, Rehabilitation Specialist, responded with more information in a letter dated December 23, 1997. He noted that, for all of Minnesota, there were 16 sheltered workshop placements for American Indians in FFY 1996, followed by 8 in FFY 1997. Yet only three placements each year were located in the Twin Cities. He observed that "northern Minnesota utilizes sheltered workshop placements more frequently than the rest of the state; however, placements occurred in all regions of the state." The most frequently used vendor in northern Minnesota was Goodwill Industries, the only such vendor in the region. There was no concentration of sheltered employment placements by geography (other than the designation of northern Minnesota), nor was there any concentration by counselor or by disability.

Lunz attributed the higher rate of sheltered employment placements to the order of selection of the Minnesota VR, which focused on serving people with more severe disabilities. He also noted that whereas in some states efforts were focused on converting sheltered workshops to supported employment, Minnesota had instead decided to add supported employment to the services available through the community rehabilitation programs, which meant that sheltered employment was still available as an option to Minnesota clients. Lunz volunteered yet another reason for the high number of sheltered workshop closures in Minnesota:

> *At closure, the person may be employed in more than one job. This is especially true for sheltered workshop placements, where the person may also have a part-time supported employment job.* ***The counselor usually codes the most restrictive placement (sheltered employment), even though the person is also working in a community-based job.*** *Since there has been no clarification from RSA on how we should code people working in multiple programs, each state has developed their own procedures [emphasis added].*

Because each state has different placement definitions, offerings, and coding procedures, there may be other states that actually have a higher number of sheltered workshop closures than their numbers indicate.

When and Why it is Used

People placed in sheltered workshops tend to be severely disabled. Those who are placed in sheltered workshops typically have mental retardation, severe health conditions, or severe physical limitations. Often, they are young adults and may come to VR through referrals from high schools. However, there is a definite trend away from the use of sheltered employment in some areas, as mentioned previously.

In the focus groups, one staff person explained why the use of sheltered employment is not popular at her agency:

> *Sheltered employment I don't like and I don't agree with. We don't place any clients there because our belief is that if we can't place them through supported employment, then we need to improve on our supported employment skills. We just believe that people with disabilities don't have to be in segregated-type work environments unless they want to be.*

In Minnesota, which reported a higher number of closures in sheltered employment as described above, several participants noted recent discouragement of sheltered employment:

> *I think even agency contracts where money goes directly to facilities, there may have been more encouragement in some financial arrangements for them to move toward supported from sheltered. It certainly has happened with some of the rehab centers.*

Another Minnesota counselor said it was becoming more rare to use sheltered employment as an ultimate goal. Several participants mentioned that it is more often used as a transitional goal, so that skills are gained and some work assessment can be done, until a more appropriate supported or competitive placement opens.

On the other hand, two counselors stated that the sheltered workshop was a very common placement, and a legitimate and permanent one, in their locales. One counselor

said this was partly due to the availability of a sheltered employment facility in her rural area, where there were few other options for employment. From what some staff members reported on the use of sheltered workshops as a goal, it may work quite well when the placement is on the reservation. At one site where participants were interviewed, the tribal VR program had a working relationship with the sheltered employment program.

Barriers

The primary barrier to the use of sheltered workshops was that they are, by definition, segregated. For example, the Minnesota VR policy manual states, with respect to IWRP development, that "the vocational goal . . . must be, to the extent appropriate and consistent with the informed choice of the individual, in an integrated setting" (Allan Lunz, personal communication, March 3, 1998). In the Casework Standards section, it further states, "if the goal is not for an integrated setting, the case file must document the consumer's rationale for choosing an segregated setting." These two statements emphasize that if the IWRP is for a sheltered workshop, it must be the *consumer's* choice, justified by the *consumer's* rationale, rather than the counselor's choice.

In our interviews, VR staff discussed a number of barriers to the use of sheltered workshops. One staff member talked about the lack of *technical assistance*:

> *There is really not a lot of technical support on self-employment, [or on training people] how to start a sheltered workshop. We have some around us here, but when you go out and do in-service with them, how to bring your programs together, how to co-service with those sheltered workshops. . . . I have talked with several people in our area that have sheltered workshops and there's still not really a lot of action on that. It's maybe training us on how to do that.*

Second, there is often a long *waiting list* for sheltered employment. This is especially a problem in North Carolina and Montana where placements are prioritized by level of need. As a result, counselors may refer clients to the workshop, but they have little control over whether or not placement is successful.

Third, financial restrictions such as *limitations on benefits from SSI or SSDI* prevent some clients from working full-time. To comply with the SSI regulations, only a minimum number of hours may be worked. Other barriers mentioned include a lack of IL skills and adequate transportation.

In addition to information gathered from focus groups, the following data collected in Arizona from the State Independent Living Council (SILC) related to the general discussion of sheltered workshops. SILC had a debate about sheltered workshops versus integrated work settings. One state entity, the Arizona Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (AZRAC), supported sheltered employment, but SILC as a whole supported integrated work settings. They decided to "compromise": as new dollars came in, only 15% would be designated for "protected" employment, and the remainder for integrated employment. This was an important change, since previously 45% of new funds were being allocated to sheltered employment. The meeting concluded with the following statement (Arizona SILC, 1998, p. 52): "All consumers who are not being placed in an integrated work setting will be considered exceptions and reviewed by a SILC subcommittee." The focus was to be put on integration. Here, state-level policy decisions were a barrier to implementing sheltered workshop placement options by restricting available funds.

Examples of Successful Cases and Strategies

In Minnesota, where sheltered workshops were most frequent for American Indian clients, as compared to all other states, counselors were asked why they used this option more than counselors in other states. Some believed it was simply because the option was available (i.e., more workshops were established and had openings in their area). One counselor explained the use of this option in terms of the relationship between the VR program and the tribe:

> *I truly feel that the Indian community has never had the option . . . such as workshops. It has been common . . . that people [with disabilities] live at home, stay at home. People do things according to their own ability and aren't asked to do more than they're capable of doing. That being the case, people have been sheltered in their own homes and never reached . . . to receive the services. And*

suddenly they are and the services are available . . ; we have people that have a trust level perhaps, that the American Indian culture's actually going out off the reservation. [Our staff are trusted] when they suggest things. The program senses this—the idea is received better and we are able to make connections for people so they are not just flung out into the community and ripped away from the comfort of their home and family. More options are available.

In other words, as trust is established between the VR program and members of the tribe, clients have the assurance to follow recommendations of the counselors, to the extent that clients are willing to leave the security of their homes for a variety of employment options, including the sheltered workshop. Thus, the sheltered workshop may come to be seen as a service option that can be attained with confidence.

One respondent gave an example of a case in which severe health problems were a barrier to placement, partly because transportation was considered too risky. In this unusual circumstance, the client began a sheltered work situation at what turned out to be her own residence:

Here on the reservation, we had to place our consumer, she was having really bad seizures and she had to have brain surgery. She was then placed into a care home here and they ended up giving her a job to help take care of and change people and talk with them and read to them. So that's a placement up here. An elderly home. That's also where she is living now.

Staff members at two VR programs reported seeing more success with sheltered employment placements if the clients also had access to IL services. However, this may have been more appropriate for clients with more severe disabilities. They also discussed how, in other cases, it is appropriate to use sheltered employment in the interim until a more desirable placement materializes, in either competitive or supported employment. One counselor described an agency that helped with this process:

I was just thinking about an organization (that's not actually a rehab center) with a contract with us . . . PPL Industries or People Unlimited in Minneapolis who states its role is to work with people of color with little or no recent job history. As a matter of fact, I think they have about 60 to 70% American Indian employees

a good deal of the time. I've got a lot of guys from my halfway house and several of those have gone to work there. If they are qualified for something that pays more, they often want to get out but at least they're willing to work for $5.25 an hour. It's a place that will tolerate perhaps a little more attendance problems and does offer some support services and a limited amount of training to upgrade people's skills. So I think it's been a culturally friendly environment for several of these people that I work with.

Other respondents agreed that this sounded like a very valuable resource to have.

Further examples of successful sheltered employment facilities included second-hand shops similar to Goodwill stores. These were on reservations with little industry and very limited options for sheltered workshops.

Supported Employment

When and Why it is Used

As mentioned in the previous section, when VR staff discussed the option of supported employment, it was often in the context of the recent trends encouraging it as a substitute for sheltered workshops. One staff member gave a succinct explanation for why supported employment may be necessary:

When we're working with people that have the most significant disabilities, we find that the traditional VR model does not work. We find that first, we may spend years trying to get a person ready and they may never get ready because there's always so many little details that are left to be taken care of that the person never gets ready for placement.

In cases based on the traditional VR model to which she was referring, there are usually intermediate objectives that are defined and met before placement is attempted. But supported employment directly contrasts with traditional VR services, where competitive employment is the placement goal. It offers the client the chance for a more immediate placement, because there are fewer hurdles to cross and training can take place on the job.

Counselors recognized that supported employment was not the most inclusive setting, and if clients were able to move on to a more inclusive one, then they should be helped to do so. However, they recognized the value of supported placements both for helping clients who need longer periods of rehabilitation to become ready for competitive jobs, and for transitioning many people from exclusively sheltered workshops into settings that were at least more inclusive.

One counselor described the use of supported employment as "work hardening." It is used to get people in the habit of working again as well as for an extended period of assessment. This may be especially appropriate when a person has had severe injuries and needs a transition from physical labor to skills that are valuable in a sedentary work setting. It was suggested as appropriate for clients with no employment background. Respondents mentioned that those with severe disabilities were well suited for supported employment, including those who need jobs specifically developed for them or who need to share jobs. They noted that supported employment placements were likely to be long-term and that there were a variety of client backgrounds, disabilities, and skill levels that would indicate this type of employment.

Job coaches were essential for getting clients ready for completing rehabilitation goals in supported employment and were described by one focus group participant when discussing supported employment:

> *The job coach can work on things like transportation situations, getting somebody's physical condition improved, or whatever it is with that client. The job coach works with that client every day as much as needed to help them to meet the requirements to be successful in that job. And most of the time, training is not the primary need. The person normally can learn the task. It might be getting work sped up [i.e., up to speed] to meet an employer's expectations, or work quality. And so the job coach can hang around and do that.*

She went on to explain how the job coach's role is phased out:

> *After the job coach is getting to the point of fading almost completely away, then our placement specialist would work with that client to identify what we call a long-term service provider. And we get what we call a third-party agreement.*

And that's just where vocational rehab is saying, okay, this person is successful. We're getting ready to close their case and we need someone to be responsible to check in with this person, make sure things are going good, and to notify vocational rehab if things weren't going well.

She explained that the third party could be a family member, a coworker, or someone at another agency.

She also discussed how the supported approach usually emphasizes the *principle of least-intrusiveness*. This is intended to show respect for the client by not risking being unnecessarily intrusive or appearing condescending by offering help that is not needed. Training is approached beginning with an assumption of a low need for assistance. For example, the job coach began by simply explaining how to do the job, and if the client is not responsive to this, more intrusive assistance is given.

In one case, the reservation was identified as an excellent setting for supported employment. A casino had just been opened on the reservation and offered many more opportunities for supported employment placements where clients could work in an inclusive setting and increase their skill levels.

The best reasons and cases for using supported employment as a vocational goal varied among staff respondents. Levels of use varied not only according to the different needs of individual clients, but also to regional differences in available resources.

Barriers

Perhaps because of the transitional nature of supported employment, one of the greatest barriers to its success was related to attitude. One woman explained that this included employer, family member, client, and VR staff attitudes. All participants in the rehabilitation process need to really believe that everyone can work. Counselors noted that the best way to change client attitudes was to show them examples of people working, people who have severe enough disabilities that others may have doubted they could work. But the biggest attitude barrier was perceived to be that of employers. One suggested solution to raise the comfort level of employers was to invite them to informational meetings; the VR staff promised them free training on how to work with people with disabilities in their workplace.

According to focus group participants, the lack of a tribal disability policy was found to be a barrier with supported employment. Counselors emphasized that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to tribal governments; therefore, there was lower awareness of disability issues and less incentive for many tribal employers to value helping people with disabilities make the transition to productive work. This has led to a situation where people with severe disabilities have had very little opportunity for employment, especially because there was not a policy to support the employment of people with disabilities. For example, one VR program reported that the local tribe was required neither to accept any of the program contracts nor to hire any of the participants.

Income limits have often been a barrier for SSI and SSDI recipients for supported employment placements as well as other placements. Counselors said that the clients and their families were afraid of losing their SSI.

One participant reported that, for him, supported employment required extra documentation:

> *Supported employment, because of a little bit of extra documentation, is a sort of a nuisance. Frankly, I use the job coaching as a transitional tool from time to time, but very seldom supported employment as a final placement.*

Another participant, who worked with a rural reservation, said that he had few supported placement options. He used his limited placement options for clients who could quickly move on to competitive employment. Because he wanted each spot to be available for the clients who were most appropriate for it, he had to consider each placement carefully.

One staff described how maintaining the job coach position could become a barrier to supported employment goals:

> *Present barriers would be funding for job coaches, . . . having enough job coaches at the right time and not too many at the wrong time. Because the job coach position itself is something that is kind of on an as-needed basis. And if you don't have a client, then you don't really need a job coach. But our experience has been that if you try [to] work with people on an as-needed basis, you can't keep quality people that are trained to be job coaches. So what we've*

had to work a long time to do is to try to get some permanent positions that the people are job coaches and they really just have two job descriptions. They are a job coach when the job coach is needed and when they are not needed, we have other things for them to work on.

Participants discussed the most effective ways to handle the barriers to supported employment, such as communicating with the family of the client and with other agencies involved in their support, and facilitating their working together. Staff training, well-prepared job coaches, and adequate evaluation periods were considered to be important as well.

Examples of Successful Cases and Strategies

Job coaches were considered to be the most essential part of supported employment. Their tasks include doing a job analysis and determining step-by-step what will be necessary to do the job. Family support also plays a very important part in a successful outcome. One woman described how well supported employment placements were working at her program:

I have used supported employment a number of times when it's appropriate. Again, the Goodwill Industries facility has very nice job placement with job coaching and leading into supported employment for people and they've developed some very excellent programs within the communities, such as with various hotels doing housekeeping and things of that nature. So it's a very nice placement. In fact I have one very interesting client who—the facility—the supported employment job placement person there helped her write a PATH plan that was used to pay for her own job coaching and that's when we got out. And that's the way we had to document that there would be a follow-along afterward.

Another participant explained that supported employment was more common and successfully used at her tribal program because they had a very good relationship with the state office. She was comfortable communicating with them about the tribe's needs and she had obtained grant funds from them to do staff training. She said she realized that

many tribal programs did not get much help from state programs. She further explained how the economy is an important factor in the success of supported employment:

> *Supported employment works better when there are plenty of jobs because employers need people and they get a little bit desperate and they are a little bit more open to look at people that can do the job. Whereas if they've got 20 applicants for every position, they might be less open to working with vocational rehab. So, I guess when the economy is better and there are more jobs, then it's easier to make placements with employers because they don't have as many people applying for those jobs. And the same with competitive employment.*

Perhaps some of the most exemplary comments on the success of supported employment came from staff people who went beyond addressing the disabilities of their clients to looking at the whole life of each client. As one counselor said:

> *We're building a philosophy, but in general, our services and our contacts and the way we do our business here have just been holistic. Just concentrating on the whole person. Yes the disability, but also what life beyond the disability and I think we have been showing some success and feeling good about what we're doing just concentrating on a holistic approach to each individual.*

A second counselor echoed these feelings:

> *That's the way the Yakima people feel. . . . I've never heard an elder tell me what they can't do—the children that are in their care. They always try to emphasize what those young people can do and that is what we've followed. I thought, "Man, these elders have been around a lot longer than I have and they know." We've tried to incorporate that into our philosophy at our program, you know? Let's do an assessment. Let's look for their strengths, not their weaknesses, and let's build on those strengths. That is where you get that self-actualization going. That's where you get that person feeling better about their self and their situation. Employment is just a secondary thing, I think. I've never heard one Native American with a disability in our community get down on you about the wages. They've never gotten down on me about their lack of responsibility. They've always emphasized that they're working, they're part of society now. They've*

been brought back in. They've been . . . mainstreamed again, back into the major community. That is what we're after.

These participants did not just see an employment situation and a disability that needed to be addressed; they were concerned with the whole quality of life of the individual, and what they could do to help that person feel included and to realize their goals in all areas.

Business Enterprise Programs

State and tribally sponsored BEPs may be managed by the client and may include a home office, computer, and additional employees. Alternatively, the BEP may be managed by a tribal VR person based on the vendor model from the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Because the BEP seemed to be used so rarely, researchers asked the participants for more details. Researchers wanted to know how counselors defined BEPs as being different from self-employment. In response, a counselor sent the researchers information from a state policy and procedure manual entitled, "Policy: Management and Supervision for Small Business Enterprise, Revised 7-01-94." This policy was "for individuals with severe handicaps," and the type of small business enterprise (SBE) that would be considered for funding was defined as "those that provide elements of being successful and provide the client with severe handicaps a means of subsistence." It excluded SBEs that "are unlawful, have no elements of success, or are not controlled by the client with severe handicaps." These restrictions resembled those for self-employment. Other provisions in this policy manual governed the acquisition of equipment and initial stocks, financing, management and supervision, and assurance of severe disability.

Another program director said that although they may have indicated BEP in their report form, it was actually more like a self-employment goal. His point seemed to be **that a BEP with only one employee was, in effect, a self-employment placement.** A second program director indicated that the difference was that self-employment is home-based, but a BEP is more elaborate, perhaps involving rental of a facility and so forth. In a separate focus group, one program director, when asked about BEPs, responded this way:

Let's see, business enterprise program, is that like the program that the state operates for blind vendors, is that what you are talking about?

Later in the same interview, she lamented not having the BEP option available on her reservation:

The business enterprise program that I'm familiar with . . . we don't have that on the reservation. I'd like to get it started. I've gotten a lot of information from the state about how they operate it. But basically the state serves as a consultant to the person with a disability and also as a technical assistance person in terms of getting started in a business. In our state, the state owns the equipment. For example, they have a cafeteria set up where the state owns the equipment and they provide the technical assistance to the person with a disability in getting business started up. The state assists with like equipment maintenance and that sort of thing. But the person with a disability or persons actually run the business in terms of managing it and performing the work and they make the profits and that sort of thing. But the state is there to provide some startup costs for equipment and then provide technical assistance along the way to keep it going.

A new tribal VR director was also very enthused about the business enterprise concept, but also perhaps a little confused about the exact definition of BEPs:

Good, that would be, and then as far as the state or federally managed tribal enterprises, that is most definitely something we all have available in our areas, especially all of us who have trust lands and we are spread out all over 13½ counties like a lot of us are. The Choctaws have what? 14? Then that makes for a lot of possible enterprises and supported type of employment opportunities out there, competitive employment that we can actually do within our own enterprises and just starting from scratch and how to go about working within your own tribal enterprises to set up this type of job development. That would be most helpful because that is where we are right now. We have tremendous amounts of jobs out there, we just have to get the right people together and start trying to get a placement system going. . . .

The director of a tribal VR program that uses the BEP placement summarized how a BEP would be set up:

> *According to ours, we have acquisition of equipment and stocks, financing, and management of supervision, which is assisting the client . . . or purchasing the management services for the client which include the specs and quality control, consultation, accounting, regulating, and the list goes on and on and on. Because, most people really don't know how to operate a small business. We purchase the services for them until such time as they learn how to do taxes if it is applicable to selling things off of the reservation and set up the books and all of the things like that.*

When and Why it is Used

AIRRTC researchers wanted to know why some regions might use BEPs more than other regions. One respondent explained:

> *For the Apaches, it is because our unemployment is so high in this little area that we are in; it is just a high unemployment rate. It's hard for clients to get competitive employment so we've really looked at creating business ventures within this tribe for our clientele. Our tribe is real open to that, not just Section 130 [tribal] consumers, but the whole tribe has a high unemployment rate. Because we try to work all of the programs together and because we specifically have to come out with employment outcomes, our tribe has been very helpful about creating jobs for these people and we're looking at a lot of things. We're a subcommittee of all of the directors in the tribe and we're called the economic development subcommittee. We all work together trying to make employment opportunities.*

Thus the regions that use BEPs may have some of the same characteristics as regions that use self-employment and sheltered workshops. That is, they may be rural and isolated with a high unemployment rate. The varieties of jobs stimulated by BEP range widely, especially when they are located on a reservation with few other options. One participant commented:

They also want to do a construction business. The tribe wants to employ some of our clientele. There are several things that you can go towards doing. Basically, we're saturated with arts and crafts people.

This is an indication of the kind of tribal interest that might serve as a basis for establishing a tribal BEP.

Because using a tribally run BEP as a placement goal might require collaboration with another tribal agency, the principal investigator asked how closely the participants worked with their tribal economic development agency. A participant replied:

I work really closely with ours because it is in the same building about 10 feet away. . . . Unfortunately, they are directed by the council to do things for the whole tribe, not individuals. That is kind of the way. You have to do things for everyone, not just one person. So we just have to kind of go out on our own and do what we do, which is like the lady that was talking before, there is not much work around here so we sit around with the clients and think of businesses to start. What would work here.

One project director expressed her concern that sometimes working too closely with the tribal economic development agency results in a less client-centered placement.

Barriers

Researchers asked the participants, when considering what kind of placements might work for their clients, what barriers come up that would make it difficult to consider BEPs as a placement. Perhaps the largest barrier could be expressed in terms of various financial snags. One program director outlined the problem in the following terms:

Financing. We have a rule here that we can only go up to $5,000 on any business enterprise. They have to have a business plan from the small business association down at the university. That is where they learn how to fill out their applications and make applications and write up their proposal and all of those kinds of things. If it is feasible and within the law, we can fund it up to $5,000, because the SBA isn't going to give you anything less than $100,000. So, it is not even

worth trying to ask them for money because that is just too much money to start small businesses around here.

With regard to tribal enterprises, finances loom large again as a barrier, as explained by one tribal VR director:

Yes . . . we try to start a bunch of small businesses . . . we have this training program and we're trying to turn it over to some clients so they can do it so they can have income. The tribe here won't let us have program income so that is why we started a community rehabilitation program. We've got to start another nonprofit; that's the only way we can get anything going here. We have some people that want to be groundskeepers, window washers and we can get contracts that are off the reservation, but the tribe won't let anybody come in. They said we'll have to hire them and you just can't hire them. People working at sub-minimum wage and the tribe wants them to buy $121 worth of insurance every two weeks and they take 30% indirect costs—you just can't do things like that. We're just going to start moving off of the reservation. Where we can start some businesses, like normal people do, without paying the tribe that may supply you with, actually, nothing. Toilet paper and lights and that's about all.

In a follow-up call, the participant explained:

We had to give up on the idea of tribally run business enterprise under the VR program. Reasons—(1) council said "no program income"; (2) the tribe wanted to have participants, 25 tribal employees; (3) the tribe wanted indirect costs, participants to be enrolled in life insurance, health insurance, and dental insurance. If we did all these—the business would be broke in 6 months.

One financial aspect that may be unique to the BEP option is the issue of taxes:

We've got the tribal taxes and then we have the tribal businesses on [tribal] land and then we have to deal with the state wanting their share of the taxes. We try to maintain sovereignty, but there are still some things we are subjected to. So, those are the kinds of things we are dealing with. Back to barriers. That was one of our barriers. We're not on a reservation in Oklahoma; we've been given

allotted land and we're like in a checkerboard area so we have a lot of jurisdictional issues on that. We are on an official share of land of the Kiowa and the Comanche tribes. A lot of our clientele are on their allotments. We've got a lot of those issues—jurisdictional. Who pays taxes to whom and whatnot right now? [That's] one of the things we are dealing with. I think that would be our barrier.

One of the lesser barriers to BEPs was alluded to earlier: Neither staff nor clients know enough about them to be fully able to explore their potential. In the words of a program director:

In our program? Well, the clients don't seem to ask us about those alternatives like self-[employment] and homemaker and unpaid family worker. That's one reason that when the clients we have . . . come in, they don't note those kinds of things as their goals. That's number one. . . . And I guess the other reason we wouldn't use it is, maybe we weren't familiar enough with it, like the business enterprise program, for example.

As was suggested earlier, BEPs are not usually suitable for clients with exceptionally severe disabilities. In fact, the disability in itself was brought up by counselors as a barrier to employment placements of this type:

The client's disability. Depending on what their disability is, like if they have a disability where they can't really work full time and then if they want to get into a business, like for example the catering person, you have to be here, every day, and if you're not here, then people get upset and maybe they don't go to your business anymore. But, we have alternatives. We tell people you have to have someone who can go do this for you. Now we encourage them to hire more voc rehab clients. We can provide them with on-the-job training and tax credits and all of that kind of stuff. So if you have all of the incentives there, they're more likely to take advantage of it.

Examples of Successful Cases and Strategies

One good example of a small business enterprise is the not-for-profit organization that runs the Zuni tribal VR agency and is also providing management services to a BEP that supplies transportation and operates a convenience store and a recycling project (Richard Corbridge, personal communication, April 6, 1999). As is the case with so many types of alternative employment, the most successful BEPs seem to be those where creativity is the rule. One promising approach that could lead towards tribally managed BEPs is a ***tribal business assistance center***, described here by a VR staff member:

> *First of all, I guess we don't have what is being defined as a business per se. Tribally owned, it's pretty much self-employment. We hope to do some piggy backing so in terms of numbers, one person starts and then they might hire on other individuals that we can place with them, for example in a greenhouse situation. We have another case now where we would like to hook a VR client up with another person who has a grass-cutting maintenance type of business. We're having some trouble with workman's comp on that. We do have a tribal business assistance center here where any of the individuals that want to go into business go over and talk to those folks and [get] some sort of guidance. We'd like to expand. I think that is the direction we are going to take in terms of businesses in general and that might even include trying to co-opt the tribe into starting some businesses at some point. I think that is the direction we would like to go at this point.*

Homemaker Placements

With homemaker placements, as with the other alternatives to competitive employment, the main question explored with VR staff was, "When, or under what circumstances, is this type of alternative employment a good idea?" The homemaker program provides support for the family unit by freeing another member to compete for a job. Because of the centrality of the family in preserving American Indian culture, this seemed like potentially a very important alternative for some individuals.

When and Why it is Used

The reasons for placing a client in homemaker status were discussed by a number of participants. Although homemaker placements have not been very prevalent historically, there seem to be cases where that alternative is clearly the best option, not only for the client but for the family as a whole. Besides citing specific needs of the individual as reasons for homemaker placements, VR staff discussed the impact of culture on placement decisions:

> *Participant: When we worked with . . . technical support and we ask about homemakers, they do not discourage it because of our culture. Because it is a difference that we may need to make within our own tribal VR.*
>
> *Researcher: Are you saying then, that perhaps Oklahoma [VR], although it might generally have a state attitude of discouragement, they do not necessarily apply that attitude towards Indian programs because of cultural differences?*
>
> *Participant: Well, I'm just only speaking again with the support that we've gotten since it began through tribal VR, technical support, when we've talked about homemakers, if you have the funds and you can help them, that is allowed. I think it is up to us at the discretion of each 130 [tribal program] whether or not or how much or whether we can, but it is a gray area. It's a gray area that I would like to have more advice on. That is definitely going to be something that we will be talking about when we get back with our tribal VR and technical support again. You know I had also asked RSA about it when we first began the program because the homemaker status was discouraged by the state.*

This participant indicated that homemaker placements are rare because they are actively discouraged by state policies. Yet, there is a growing realization that an understanding of American Indian culture predicates a greater demand for this kind of placement. This was emphasized by the opinion of another counselor in a different conference call:

> *So, that's the only thing I can think of . . . that a person could have that would be based on their cultural heritage, would be to make arts and crafts, other than things like homemaker. Because of the cultural heritage that, for example, a mother thinks that she should stay at home and care for her children and clean*

the house and cook for her husband and things like that. That would be a goal if that's what that person wanted that was based on their cultural heritage.

The problem is that there is no clear direction for implementation, and this is confusing for counselors who need more placement options. Another participant commented:

It varies case by case I think. That would be a tough one to generalize I think because one of our problems with working with the direct consumer is you have to take into consideration the family aspect and it is difficult to counsel with everyone, but it is also difficult to counsel with just your consumer by themselves. That is an ongoing case-by-case situation I think, for us here.

Some participants observed that homemaker placements were often used with people who had more severe disabilities or long-term disabilities:

Participant 1: In our case, I would say it is probably the more severely disabled people who are receiving these services.

Participant 2: I'll say the majority are, well yes, more severe.

Later, additional information about the disabilities of consumers with homemaker placements was provided:

Participant 1: Both of our homemakers right now do have diabetes. . . .

Participant 2: Both of mine are blind—or just about blind. It is a congenital defect and there are like four other people from that particular family in that particular village that has about 170 people . . . so I don't know if it is cultural. It's not cultural, but it is a congenital disability that occurs in that particular area. . . . In our case we had an O and M [Orientation and Mobility] specialist come in and it kind of gave us a heads up of what kinds of needs the individual had to maintain herself in her home and the second individual also spent some time with the O and M specialist. We did contract with somebody who had the knowledge in the area of blind services come in at their home site where they were able to do a complete assessment of what those needs are and he has been

very good about advising us on what types of equipment and implements to buy for the folks.

Another factor that might lead to the choice of homemaker as a goal is the age of the client, as was mentioned in the following exchange. The suggestion was that many homemaker placements might be women who are middle-aged or older:

Participant 1: I think homemakers tend to be sometimes, from what I see of it, possibly middle-age and up. I don't know if that's true, but are you all seeing this?

Participant 2: Our youngest one is probably in mid-thirties.

Participant 3: That's not too old. Both of mine are well into their fifties. Over 55, I believe.

Homemaker placements can also be helpful when a consumer simply does not seem to have any other options:

Researcher: Are there any particular socio-economic conditions that affect the desirability or the feasibility of homemaker placements with your programs?

Participant: It is usually the people that are in the lowest economic [bracket] that really don't have other possible resources. One with diabetes that we had that had an amputation below the knee and then possibly looking at the other leg going to be amputated soon. She's middle-aged, mother of three and divorced. A single lady, living alone to take care of her family. So, lack of resources. Low economic resources. Utilizing as much as possible the resources right here in Chickasaw Nation. I know that the community health rep visits to make sure she has the right medical needs, things like that.

When there are absolutely no other options, the clients have a better chance of actually being placed when more funds are available. One counselor mentioned that he considered homemaker placements to be the most expensive, "because [the clients] are most severely handicapped." Given the perceived expense of the homemaker placement, researchers questioned why certain counselors were actually using it with above average frequency. They responded:

Participant 3: In our, to answer the question for this particular 130 [tribal VR] program, it is because we still have funding available. We are in our second year and still have available funding and we feel like as long as we are doing that then we should be helping as many people as we can with disabilities. If we can keep them in a homemaker type role while we have funds available then that is why we keep it going.

Participant 2: I think that is true with us too. We have the funds to be able to do that and not be detrimental to the people in the other statuses, even though the homemaker is actually more expensive in some aspects than the others.

Participant 1: In our case, it is coincidental that both of the people that we are servicing are low vision and they come from the same village. I think this is just what they have selected. The second person selected it after the first person was through. I think that word of mouth might have had something to do with that one.

The perceived expense of homemaker placements may be one reason that information about this employment option has rarely been actively disseminated. Consequently, when homemaker placement has been set as a goal, the impetus has been from the consumer, who may have heard about it by word of mouth. Other programs found that to be the case. A client would come in and they would be working on the IWRP together and the client would say, "So and so got a homemaker placement, can I get one too?" VR staff participants had varying opinions as to the degree that this type of placement actually occurred. In many cases, unless the client actually indicated where she heard about this option, the counselor may not have understood the context for the client's request.

Barriers

Earlier, it was reported that most homemaker placements among programs for American Indian clients were from Oklahoma, yet the Oklahoma VR was under some pressure to reduce the number of these closures. In the survey of tribal VR programs, it was also discovered that most tribal VR programs making more than one such placement

per year were in Oklahoma. AIRRTC researchers wondered about the relationship between these observations. One project director commented:

> *We are one of the newer 130s in Oklahoma and . . . when we first began our program almost two years ago, when we asked about homemakers, it was like they did not really want to discuss that because, what we are hearing is that the state is really trying to phase that section out. I think that they do it, but very discreetly and very seldom these days. I believe that with our regulations [and] after talking to a lot of people . . . in tribal VR about . . . utilizing our homemakers to benefit our consumers . . . because of our federal regulations being different than the state, do we have that flexibility to [provide services]? I asked [a counselor] about that and he said as far as he knew, we could. That is a little bit of a gray area for us right now with homemakers.*

The attitude of state rehabilitation services has probably been directly related to the perceived expensive nature of homemaker closures referred to earlier. Counselors have tended to use financial reasons as a basis for prioritizing services. This is generally acknowledged as a problem:

> *Participant 3: Well, I think that if you were limited on funds, you would probably do the most severe first and that may be your homemaker and it may be a need for self-employment, but I think you would need to steer away from that, just like high medical costs. Are we discriminating there?*
>
> *Participant 2: Homemaker is probably the most expensive because they are the most severely . . . disabled.*

Although lack of funding is a barrier shared by most alternative placement options, it is not the only reason that states or programs and counselors might hesitate to increase the use of homemaker placements. Clients who are closed to homemaker status have a way of coming back for repetitive services. This is a problem that was discussed in depth by participants:

Participant 2: I have experienced the same thing with my one individual that I had closed as a homemaker. She has needed to be reopened for post-employment services. She finds that she needs more assistance than she did the first year we had her.

Participant 4: There is a very fine line between entitlement and actually homemaking. You know what I'm saying? Do we just continually keep servicing this person for a long extended period of time or is that a discretion within each counselor to the consumer or what?

This raised the question whether, in their IWRPs, the tribal VR counselors established criteria that would be used to determine when they could close the case, with the consumer's agreement. The participants responded:

Participant 1: Yes, we did that and this person keeps coming back and because we put a particular type of shoe for her to gain more mobility around the home that she continually needs an update on the type of shoe that we are getting her. So that's the problem with the continuing dependency of homemakerism. But, you're right; we do need to be more specific in our IWRPs.

Participant 2: We have experienced the same thing with the woman that has the vision problems and she has found other things that she needs to maintain her home and her working environment in her home. We did set the original guidelines and followed them for 90 days and she keeps coming back too.

Participant 3: At this time, I think I need to go ahead and mention that earlier this year, the program—this was prior to me coming to this program—opted to stop assisting homemakers and the problems that you all are stating is a lot of the reason that Randy made that decision [to stop assisting homemakers]. It was repetitive services. At the time, we are not serving in that status. We did earlier this year, but like I said we opted to go ahead and not provide services.

The problem of supplying repetitive services after a case is closed can be exacerbated when it is combined with the family-oriented nature of homemaker placement. In some cases, either the family proves to be a resistant force against the

client's rehabilitation goals, or else everyone gets involved in the client's welfare, the client's choice, and bringing VR services back into the picture:

> *Researcher: I was thinking that one of the situations might be that unless the family buys into the solution, there may be problems achieving the homemaker goals that you set up.*
>
> *Participant: Well, let me tell you about the problem that we have had, and it goes back to that same case; the family members that live with this particular homemaker are the most persistent about getting services for that person. We've even had a brother-in-law that works for the tribe call us wanting to know when we are going to get this other particular service going for this person, which we can't give the information to, but it gets to be a family ordeal. It really does with the few cases that we have had.*

Examples of Successful Cases and Strategies

At the beginning of this section, it was indicated that a typical reason for counselors and clients to use homemaker status as a vocational goal is to allow another family member to leave the home to bring an income to the family. One VR staff person explained it this way:

> *Sometimes there'll be an incident where it's real clear that a person really needs to stay at home and that's what they want to do and if they had some services, then they could do that. For example, we have a lady now that has carpal tunnel syndrome . . . [and] she has some problems like cooking and that sort of thing for her husband and for her children and her grandchild. So we've been able to go in and do some modifications to the stove and stuff like that so that she can pick up pots better.*

Providing homemaker services for this woman enabled her family to become more productive in the workforce while saving on childcare.

Unpaid Family Workers

There is a traditional view of the unpaid family worker status. A program director offered the following characterization:

> *Unpaid family worker . . . would be a person working for example on a farm that a family owns and is not paid or they could be working in another family business like crafts or something like that. So the person is not paid but receives other benefits like shelter and food and clothing and has their needs met based on their participation in their work.*

This is the more narrow definition. But, like so many of the alternative employment options, AIRRTC researchers found that there are more ways of approaching this type of placement.

One of the first focus group discussions was with state VR counselors from Alaska. The focus group had primarily been arranged to discuss their unpaid family workers placements. However, it immediately became clear that in order to understand their use of these placements, it was necessary to understand that their approach was based on an innovative and creative state policy:

> *Back in 1989, our agency's director got together with Dick Corbridge from RSA down in Seattle and they went about the task of writing a position paper on what constitutes employment, and in the end, what they came up with was a new definition for employment that they presented nationwide at an RSA administrator's meeting. Basically, it's become our agency's working definition of employment. Although it's kind of a mouthful in its one line, . . . what they came up with was, "Work means any substantial meaningful activity to which an individual devotes time and exerts physical or mental effort towards the production or accomplishment of something which significantly contributes to the livelihood of the individual and which benefits society."*

The decision to take this approach was based on Alaska's socioeconomic realities, which one counselor expressed as follows:

Because a lot of the communities that are remote in Alaska are probably not unlike tribal places too, where it's remote and there's probably some things about the economy that are noteworthy and how people survive, get their livelihood and things. We might say for example, this person lives in a small remote isolated community in northwest Alaska, about 200 residents, not too many competitive jobs in the community, most people work seasonally, if they can get jobs. They gather resources off the land, off the water to survive on. They barter a bit for services; they produce some arts and crafts for supplemental income. Something like that, see, that sort of gives you a quick picture of what the community might look like for that person or what their employment picture, their livelihood looks like.

This seems to mean that traditional definitions of competitive employment were modified and made more flexible. Counselors took advantage of the fact that the "Dictionary of Occupational Titles," which provides the codes used to identify jobs, has a number of categories for fishing, hunting, and farming (occupational title codes 40x- to 46x-). Upon request, documentation for some examples was forwarded to the researchers (see Table 3).

Table 3
Sample Job Placements (Alaska)

Employment Goal	DOT Code	Employer	Salary
Reindeer Herder	410161	Self-employed & Subsistence	N/A
Bread Maker	313381	[Home-based]	[unknown]
Subsistence Hunter	461684	Self	N/A

The DOT Code 410161 refers to animal breeders and livestock ranchers (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) and would apply equally well to many traditional ranching operations in the Southwest and the Dakotas. One of the counselors commented,

One of the things that have been beneficial in terms of writing a plan that essentially identifies a service or a goal that's going to help supplement subsistence lifestyle is that people can really go a long ways in Alaska to providing for themselves off the land. I mean, the hunting, the fishing, the gathering is really a large and integral part of the cultures here. I think some of the individuals that I've worked with really don't have a huge need for income. They need income to supplement that but I'm not sure that the same equation exists, at least everywhere in the lower 48, in terms of the abundant resources. So that may be something that you'll have to grapple with a little bit. Here I don't have any problem writing a plan and saying this worker, self-employment or whatever it is that's identified, is going to supplement their subsistence lifestyle because the subsistence lifestyle is probably half of what they need to survive.

Another counselor commented,

Because of the nature of the environment in Alaska, employment goals are less likely to be for full-time or even half-time employment. And it is not uncommon for goals for competitive employment, as well as for self-employment, to include part-time or seasonal work.

Barriers

The following counselor in Alaska discussed how additional subsistence activities may be all that is needed for a client in a rural area there. But there are barriers, such as what the state expects in terms of financial outcomes:

It's not just a financial end that drives everyone. But unfortunately, the people that provide the funds oftentimes tend to get overly focused just on the dollar and cents of the issue. And how much tax return are we going to get off the people that are rehabilitated. But for folks out in small communities, it goes much beyond just an economic and dollar and cents type of value.

More typical are the responses of these participants:

Participant 1: I have not ever used the unpaid family worker or homemaker category, at least not in many, many years.

Participant 2: Yeah, I've never used unpaid family worker and I may possibly have used homemaker at some point in the past.

Participant 3: I have never used it either. . . . I'm probably the newest person here and I certainly have never used it.

Participant 4: I've haven't used unpaid family or homemaker either.

Researcher: In general, why do you think that alternative goals such as the ones that we've been discussing are not being used as much as competitive employment? Are there any barriers to using these alternative goals?

Participant 1: It seems like a cop-out to get a closure to do unpaid family worker. I mean I understand the concept there. It's just not a thing I've ever gotten involved in.

Researcher: You say you don't use unpaid family worker much. I'm thinking in the context of cottage industry kinds of things where the family might be involved in the production of crafts or things. I'm wondering if there are circumstances where the lack of employment in the client's area might cause you to take a longer look at some of these other options.

Participant 1: As far as unpaid, that's kind of a problem, I think.

Researcher: In what way is it a problem?

Participant 1: In terms of our agency, I don't think they look at that as an appropriate outcome.

Participant 2: In fact, I think we're seeing a little bit of pressure which I think is coming from national sources about looking, rather askance at any sub-minimum wage settings.

Other Issues: Considerations Applying to All Alternative Placements

The focus group protocol included questions about a number of topics that might affect the use of particular placement outcomes (see Appendix D). Responses that were applicable to a wide range of placement outcomes are summarized below.

Cultural Relevance

Participants were asked, "Which alternative employment goals (if any) are better suited for any of your Native American clients based on their cultural heritage?" One counselor in New Mexico responded that he occasionally has clients who are very religious and when they have religious ceremonies they will not go to work for up to several days, without notifying their employers or calling in sick. He said that he is reluctant to place such clients in competitive employment positions. So, in some cases, some alternative employment may suit the client's needs better than competitive placements, because of the higher level of flexibility and independence entailed in alternative employment.

Other New Mexico counselors commented that the suitability of alternative employment might be connected to the market as much as the influence of culture:

> *Participant 1: Here in Taos, I don't think it is cultural as much as this is an area where there is a really heavy tourist population and the market is there. So like I say, we have several . . . people selling at the pueblo; they are able to target a larger population that is already there in the pueblo. . . . People from Germany, Japan, and other countries are buying some of this equipment and materials our clients are making.*
>
> *Participant 2: I guess they are artistically inclined, but to their culture, you know, they have the Indian dancers, the beading, the leather work, making the shawls, it just depends. It is artistic, they can draw, they can sculpture, they can do just about anything.*

For the clients in New Mexico, artistic endeavors were available that were suited to their specific cultural expressions. The tourists were visiting the pueblos for the single

purpose of absorbing and understanding that culture. This created an ideal situation for alternative employment that grew out of and was suited to cultural needs.

Socioeconomic Circumstances

A related question asked, "What are the socioeconomic conditions that affect the practicality of competitive employment versus alternatives?" This led to the following brief discussion:

> *Researcher: I gather from some of what you said that you feel that these alternative goals are useful not only for American Indians, but for other people, especially in rural areas, and that there is nothing particular about American Indian culture that makes any of these alternative goals especially appropriate.*
>
> *Participant 1: Yes.*
>
> *Participant 2: It fits them a little better, because they are short on transportation, short on money, and a long ways from town. And living in areas where the job market is very limited.*

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The family is of fundamental importance to American Indian and Alaska Native cultures. It is the basic unit in which cultural knowledge, attitudes, values, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to the next, often in a Native language. Recognition of the role of the family is all the more important in such a minority culture in which language as well as knowledge, attitudes, values, and beliefs may differ from those of the majority culture. Historically, the assimilation policies of the federal government deliberately attempted to undermine American Indian families by such tactics as removing children from their homes and placing them in boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak the Native language and were harshly penalized for any expression of culture that differed from that of the majority (Hirschfelder & Kreipe de Montano, 1993, pp. 92–102).

Competitive employment may disrupt and weaken American Indian and Alaska Native families if placement requires moving to a distant city where there are more jobs,

or if the process of rehabilitation in preparation for competitive employment disrupts the family without some later compensating reinforcement of family ties. However, some of the alternatives to competitive employment legally available to VR clients may offer a type of placement that is more culturally appropriate in that the family might be supported and strengthened, rather than weakened and fragmented. In this study, AIRRTC researchers have conducted a preliminary examination of how these alternatives are being used by and for American Indians. In particular, these alternatives include the homemaker and unpaid family worker placements, which are discussed at greater length below. However, self-employment and other alternatives were also examined for their potential benefits.

Researchers had hypothesized that the alternatives to competitive employment would be found to be underutilized when compared to non-Indians and in respect to need. The data show that about 80% of American Indian cases were closed in competitive employment, compared with 85% of non-Indian cases—or, equivalently, that 20% of American Indian cases were closed in various alternatives to competitive employment, compared with 15% of non-Indian cases. Thus, while the utilization rates between Indians and non-Indians are not substantially different, AIRRTC researchers did find that certain alternative placements were being discouraged, when it may serve the best interests of American Indian clients to use them more optimally and more widely.

Admittedly, there is room for abuse of these alternatives. No one is arguing for indiscriminate use of alternative employment. But to discourage alternative placements out of hand is certainly not culturally competent and risks being culturally insensitive. When competitive employment is rare or absent in an American Indian community, to insist on competitive employment and to discourage the legal alternatives described earlier violates the spirit of the policy of self-determination, established by President Nixon in 1970, and made law by Congress in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Hirschfelder & Kreipe de Montano, 1993, pp. 30–31).

Sometimes, the barrier to implementation of these kinds of placements is simply due to a lack of information about successful examples, although most staff participants claimed familiarity with all of the six employment categories. But even among those who claimed familiarity, their understanding often seemed narrow. Bad experiences with

some such placements were a discouraging factor, along with fear of the unknown, rumors about abuses, and a lack of technical support. It would appear that basic positive information is needed about all of the alternatives to competitive employment.

Sheltered Workshops

Although sheltered workshops have fallen out of favor nationally, and more integrated settings are often more desirable, one participant indicated that she would prefer this placement in some cases if it were available, but no such facility existed in her area. For consumers with certain severe disabilities, a sheltered employment setting may sometimes be an appropriate short-term goal, depending on what alternatives are available. The viability and success of sheltered workshops for some American Indian clients has been demonstrated at sites such as Toyei Industries and Coyote Canyon on the Navajo Reservation. Such reservation-based sheltered workshops can be run using American Indian concepts of wellness and wholeness, and can promote transition to supported and other kinds of employment when appropriate.

Some focus group participants mentioned that sheltered employment was termed "extended employment" in their region. This might be due to differences among state policies. In certain instances, a sheltered workshop may be the best option, especially if it is the placement preferred by the client.

Possibilities for overcoming barriers to placing clients desiring to work in sheltered workshops include developing an interagency team approach by communicating with the tribal, state, and local agencies, developmental disability agencies, and independent living centers. The goal is to come to an agreement on how to best serve clients who are severely disabled.

Supported Employment

When a supported placement is a temporary goal, it allows for an extended period of assessment. This may be necessary when counselors are uncertain if the client should attempt competitive employment or if his or her goals are realistic. As in all cases, client input and vocational evaluation are vitally important. There may be cases in which a

client is placed in a supported setting before a definite goal is set. This allows intermediate goals to be addressed after the placement.

Goal setting and complying with Social Security regulations are areas in which job coaches have been able to help clients. Coaches are often aware of the exact income limits and the need to communicate with the Social Security office regarding income changes. They can help clients understand how their new work situation will affect their SSI benefits. Coaches can also help complete an impairment-related work expense form to help clients secure their SSI benefits until they have had time to make sure that employment is going to work for them. Understanding SSI benefit changes and third-party agreements can go a long way toward successful supported employment.

Self-Employment

Self-employment placements also may strengthen and support the family, while providing an adequate source of income, if appropriately planned and implemented. This type of placement requires creativity and resourcefulness on the part of both the counselor and client, as they consider local business needs and perhaps even subsistence needs when establishing a variety of alternative employment goals and new occupations. The VR system in New Mexico seemed to provide the best examples of self-employment placements for American Indians. Some counselors considered self-employment to be competitive if it resulted in sufficient earnings. Some counselors applied a similar standard to supported and sheltered employment, considering them equivalent to competitive employment if the client made more than the minimum wage.

Success in self-employment often requires patience and tenacity on the part of the consumers, and this may be a tall order for people who may already be struggling to overcome a list of limitations. Counselors and clients need to understand that the outcomes are variable at times.

Barriers to self-employment can include developing an appropriate business plan, start-up costs, and HUD housing regulations (i.e., clients cannot do business at home if they live in HUD-supported housing). Additionally, there has been a general lack of knowledge about self-employment on the part of both counselors and their clients. Not only do consumers need to have the knowledge about how self-employment works, but

counselors may need training in this area as well. Counselor skills in understanding self-employment will be passed on to consumers, resulting in a greater success rate with consumers for whom more traditional employment venues are not possible.

Business Enterprise Programs

A number of counselors in the focus groups were not familiar with business enterprise programs (BEPs). There seemed to be some uncertainty regarding the nature and scope of a BEP, which indicates that education and training regarding BEPs would be useful for staff of VR programs to allow them to more fully understand and appreciate this option in planning for some of their clients. Training is needed on what a state or tribal BEP can be, how they can be set up, who can set them up, and how they are different from a self-employment small business enterprise. One participant mentioned items that would be appropriate for training for future BEP participants whether counselor or client, including (a) acquisition of equipment and stocks, (b) financing, and (c) basic business management.

Knowledgeable VR staff people mentioned three barriers to the successful use of BEPs: finances, information, and severe disability. Clients that are successful with BEPs were likely to have more similarities with self-employment placements than with sheltered workshop placements, and the same kind of creativity is needed to generate both kinds of new employment ventures. One participant speculated that the general tendency of tribal BEPs would be collaborative rather than individualistic in nature.

Although few clear examples of tribally managed BEPs could be identified in the VR staff focus groups, apart from a few examples such as the Tuba City Laundromat, this is an area of great potential that is as yet untapped. It seemed that in one or two cases, a tribe wanted to run the BEP but was not interested in helping to finance it. In other cases, the problem of taxes proved to be an additional burden where two or more tribes plus the state were each demanding their share of the client's earnings. Two tribes shared the land where one BEP was located. Each of them wanted their share of taxes, and then the state wanted taxes as well. Even if the initial financial hurdles were finally surmounted, and financing for the BEP became available, the clients' profits disappeared. In such cases, a client's take-home pay may not be worth the effort. If the financial issues can be worked

out for BEPs, such as who pays how much for what and where taxes go, the other barriers may not seem so insurmountable.

The development of tribal BEPs is worth future exploration. The Tuba City Laundromat might serve as a model for such programs because it was established and funded by the Navajo Nation specifically for the employment of people with disabilities. It is important that a greater understanding of the business enterprise programs be disseminated, so that both counselors and clients will be able to make a more informed choice to achieve their personal goals for employment.

Homemaker

In several states it was observed that, on the one hand, VR counselors found a need to use homemaker status as a rehabilitation goal, and on the other hand, VR administration sought to minimize the use of, or even to phase out, this option. The attitude of state VR administration can be a very strong barrier, creating confusion about rehabilitation options, and narrowing the potential for successful placements and case closures. The VR system in Oklahoma seems to provide the best examples of culturally appropriate homemaker placements, and yet it is the very place where administration is seeking to minimize placements of this kind.

An important objective when implementing placements for American Indians may be the cultural need for collaborative rather than individual decision making on behalf of the consumer. In this case, the whole family should become involved when setting goals for placement, particularly when homemaker status is a possible goal. The homemaker placement may be needed when, for example, three or more generations live together in one house. A person with a disability who can take charge of the household and thus be the homemaker who qualifies for this work status may make it possible for other family members to engage in productive tasks elsewhere. This helps to keep the multigenerational family together, instead of fragmenting it. However, this needs to be a collaborative decision. The example provided earlier of the woman with carpal tunnel syndrome, whose daughter had a new baby perhaps provided a case that illustrated this point. In that case, by making some modifications to the kitchen and other home

alterations, she could provide homemaking services to her multigenerational family that enabled the whole family to function well.

For homemaker placements, there seemed to be a number of barriers to utilization: (a) pressure from administration to minimize use of non-competitive placements, (b) counselors' fear of repetitive requests for on-going services, and (c) lack of funding. Perhaps the solution to some of these matters of closure is for the family to be brought into the picture from the beginning, with clear outcome objectives and closure criteria. If goals are clear to all parties at the start, and then reiterated for the whole group at closure of the case, use of the homemaker placement can become more straightforward, alleviating the misunderstandings that are occurring for some people.

Additionally, although homemakers with disabilities like diabetes and blindness may not be able to earn money from the services rendered by VR and other specialists, they will have heightened independent living skills and make their contributions to the well-being of others. These are benefits that can be just as beneficial as the financial rewards of competitive employment.

Unpaid Family Worker

Unpaid family workers who engage in traditional subsistence activities such as hunting or herding, or noncommercial farming and gardening, can be productive while supporting the family and decreasing its need for outside assistance. Four participants in the focus groups discussed examples of these kinds of placements, and two participants asked for a definition of unpaid family worker.

The VR system in Alaska seems to provide the best examples of unpaid family worker placements of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The bread maker example (see Table 3) fits the traditional self-employment model, because the objective was to sell the bread for profit at a local store. However, the reindeer herder and subsistence hunter fit the unpaid family worker model more than the self-employment model, because the intent seemed to be primarily to make it possible for the consumer to provide for his family by herding or hunting.

One counselor observed that with the category "unpaid family worker," where the goal is subsistence without pay, the barrier to closure is still monetary; i.e., the unpaid

status of the worker. In the very case where financial outcome should not be the issue, it may be the primary factor regarding underutilization with this employment option. Clients may not even know that VR services are available with "unpaid family worker" as an outcome. Thus while it is useful for a client to request services with some idea of possible rehabilitation goals, the client will not be able to identify the full range of possible goals without input from the counselor regarding the full range of alternative employment options.

Recommendations

Alternative employment options may often fit the needs of American Indians strictly because of location in rural locales with a limited job market, aside from cultural factors. However, refusing to admit the very real cultural factors that pertain to each situation is to exclude part of the understanding it takes to make a successful placement. The need for alternative employment placements may be heightened within the American Indian population because of the dual factors of geographic isolation and culture. Focus on one factor should not minimize the importance of the other.

Although this survey of alternatives to competitive employment was by no means conclusive, the results of this study support the following recommendations:

1. National and regional RSA offices should be informed about the **cultural importance of alternatives to competitive employment**, and should be trained by Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RRCEPs) to deal with this issue in a culturally competent way. Insensitive attempts to discourage these alternatives should be countered with appropriate information about their importance to the vitality of Native cultures.
2. All state and tribal VR program staff should be trained in the advantages and appropriate use of the legal alternatives to competitive employment. Toward this end, the annual meeting of CANAR (Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation) should include **workshops highlighting effective and appropriate uses of the alternatives to competitive employment**, along with information about how to deal with the common abuses, if any, associated with these types of placements.

3. All American Indian and Alaska Native **clients should be fully informed** about all legal alternatives to competitive employment so that they can make an informed choice of goals in their plan for employment. None of the legal alternatives should be described negatively.
4. To facilitate effective **self-employment solutions**, a tribe or urban Indian center might establish a cooperative facility (if none currently exists) where the clients can set up their offices or work areas, receive technical assistance, and have access to computers, telephones, and marketing assistance for a nominal rental fee. At this facility, on-site classes from a community college could be held on such topics as bookkeeping, record management, marketing techniques, entrepreneurship, and computer use. A mentors program, such as a business association for individuals with disabilities, might also be effective.
5. **Consultation involving the whole family unit** should be included in the individual's plan for employment (Marshall & Johnson, 1996). What impact will various alternative plans have on the family? What plans will strengthen the family? What plans would weaken the family? What will determine the ultimate closure of the case? Family and home are often closely linked. Consequently, visitation and evaluation of the client's needs in the home (such as a lower working table, ramps, or accessibility of materials) should become routine (if not already routine) in order to make home-based placements more effective.
6. Case studies should be made of **successful examples of sheltered workshops** (such as Coyote Canyon Rehabilitation Center and Toyei Industries, Inc.), tribally managed business enterprises (such as the Navajo Nation Industrial Laundromat in Tuba City), self-employment, unpaid family worker, and homemaker. Relevant information for sheltered workshops, BEPs, and self-employment should include how they were originally financed and established, what training or technical assistance was provided and by whom, how the business was organized and run, and whether any marketing analysis was done.

7. Helpful information for **unpaid family worker** and **homemaker placements** would include family and home assessment information as well as an outcome analysis. The **outcome assessment of such placements should include the probable effect on the incomes of other family members.**

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Appendix A:

Small Business Enterprises

Small Business Enterprises

34 CFR 361.49(a)(5) Scope of vocational rehabilitation services for groups of individuals with disabilities.

(a) The State plan may also provide for the following vocational rehabilitation services for the benefit of groups of individuals with disabilities:

(1) The establishment, development, or improvement of a public or other nonprofit community rehabilitation program that is used to provide services that promote integration and competitive employment, including under special circumstances, the construction of a facility for a public or nonprofit community rehabilitation program. Examples of special circumstances include the destruction by natural disaster of the only available center serving an area or a State determination that construction is necessary in a rural area because no other public agencies or private nonprofit organizations are currently able to provide services to individuals. . . .

(5) In the case of small business enterprises operated by individuals with the most severe disabilities under the supervision of the State unit, including enterprises established under the Randolph-Sheppard program, management services and supervision, acquisition of equipment, initial stocks and supplies, and initial operating expenses, in accordance with the following requirements:

(i) "Management services and supervision" includes inspection, quality control, consultation, accounting, regulating, in-service training, and related services provided on a systematic basis to support and improve small business enterprises operated by individuals with the most severe disabilities. "Management services and supervision" may be provided throughout the operation of the small business enterprise.

(ii) "Initial stocks and supplies" includes those items necessary to the establishment of a new business enterprise during the initial establishment period, which may not exceed six months.

(iii) Costs of establishing a small business enterprise may include operational costs during the initial establishment period, which may not exceed six months.

(iv) If the State plan provides for these services, it must contain an assurance that only individuals with the most severe disabilities will be selected to participate in this supervised program.

(v) If the State plan provides for these services and the State unit chooses to set aside funds from the proceeds of the operation of the small business enterprises, the State plan also must assure that the State unit maintains a description of the methods used in setting aside funds and the purposes for which funds are set aside. Funds may be used only for small business enterprise purposes, and benefits that are provided to operators from set-aside funds must be provided on an equitable basis

Appendix B:

Focus Group Participants

Focus Group Participants

R-39 Focus Group Participants (in addition to Dr. Robert Schacht, Karla Wagner, and Julie Clay):

Topic: Unpaid Family Workers (March 4, 1998, Alaska state VR)

Larry Hintz, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II, Fairbanks
Pat Kuchenberg, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II, Juneau
Rick Hoover, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II, Anchorage
Russ Music, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Sitka

Topic: Sheltered Employment (March 5, 1998, Minnesota state VR)

Alan Gordon, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Minneapolis
Anni Magoris, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Duluth
John Fairbanks, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Duluth
Sharon Johnson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Duluth

Topic: Homemaker Placements (June 17, 1998, Tribal VR programs)

Jackie Bisbee, Coordinator, Vocational Education, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska
Linda Goodwin, Assistant Director, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Gayla Callaway, Project Director, Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma
Robert Washington, Director, Iowa Tribes, Oklahoma

Topic: Business Enterprise Program Placements (June 22, 1998, Tribal VR programs)

Laura Maudsley, Intertribal Stillaguamish Project Director, Washington
Ken Callahan, Project Director, Fort Hall, Idaho
John Domitrovich, Assistant, Salish Kootenai College, Montana
Delorna Strong, Project Director, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma

Topic: Sheltered Employment Placements (June 21, 1998, Tribal VR programs)

John Domitrovich, Assistant, Salish Kootenai College, Montana

Debbie Bell, Counselor, Salish Kootenai College, Montana

Denise Curlee, Program Service Manager, Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, North Carolina

Topic: Supported Employment Placements (June 18, 1998, Tribal VR programs)

Lloyd Pinkham, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Yakima Indian Nation, Washington

Arlene Savage, Project Director, Salish Kootenai College, Montana

Linda Goodwin, Assistant Director, Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma

Denise Curlee, Program Service Manager, Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, North Carolina

Mystical Parker, Job Coach (with Denise), Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, North Carolina

Topic: Supported Employment Placements (July 2, 1998, Tribal VR program)

Mary Meruvia, Director, Choctaw Vocational Rehabilitation, Mississippi

Topic: Self-Employment Placements (May 27, 1998, New Mexico state VR)

John Valesquez, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Taos

Brenda Berredas, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Alamagordo

Steven Norduse, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Farmington

William Rodriguez, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Albuquerque

Topic: Self-Employment Placements (June 15, 1998, Tribal VR programs)

Bob Starbard, Project Director, Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska

Marie Covington, Project Director, Colville Confederated Tribes, Washington

Victor "Skip" DeSautel, VR Counselor III, Colville Confederated Tribes, Washington

Jackie Bisbee, Coordinator of Vocational Education, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska

Ken Callahan, Project Director, Ft. Hall, Idaho

Appendix C:

Tribal VR Data Collection Instrument

Tribal VR Data Collection Instrument

Please fill in the following table with the information from your agency for last year:

Work Status at Closure	Number of female cases	Number of male cases
Competitive Employment		
Supported Employment only		
Sheltered Workshops		
Self-employment		
State or Tribally managed Business Enterprises		
Homemaker		
Unpaid Family Worker		

How is "last year" defined?

a. Calendar year 1997

b. Fiscal year (ending _____, 199___)

c. Other (Please define:_____)

If the closure categories used by your agency are not the same as the ones listed above, or you have unique interpretations of the categories, please explain: _____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D:

Focus Group Questions for VR Counselors

Focus Group Questions for VR Counselors

1. Do you have a working knowledge of all six of the employment options (i.e., competitive employment, sheltered employment, unpaid family workers, self-employment, homemaker, State/Tribally sponsored Business Enterprise Program)?

2. What are the definitions for all the employment categories?
   What are the criteria for deciding which category to place an activity in?
   Where are you getting the criteria? Is there a written policy?

3. Are there options you feel more or less comfortable using due to your level of knowledge about them? Which ones?

4. In general, why do you think that alternative goals are not being used as much as competitive employment?

5. Are there barriers to the utilization of alternative goals? If so, what are they? (policy, economic, cultural?)

6. Do you feel that your clients can be more successful in alternative employment placements than in competitive placements? Why?

7. (After reviewing placement statistics) Why is your state using this particular goal more than other states?

8. Is there a special funding allocation for this goal? Funding limits? Please describe:

9. Are there key people in the organization advocating for the use of this goal? Who are they?

10. Which alternative employment goals (if any) are better suited for any of your Native American clients based on their cultural heritage?

    Based on their socio-economic situation?

11. Are there policy guidelines in your office concerning the use of alternative or competitive IWRP goals? If so, will you please send us documents pertaining to this policy?

12. What is the philosophy behind placing people in alternative employment?

13. What are the characteristics that make people better suited for competitive employment?

    Alternative employment?

14. What are the socio-economic conditions that affect the practicality of competitive employment vs. alternatives?

15. *Should* alternative goals be used more for American Indians? For anyone?

    Are they better for a particular economic situation? How?

    For a particular tribe? How?

    For a particular living arrangement? How?

16. Is the placement process different for American Indians? How?

    Does the VR counselor use different evaluation techniques? Please describe them:

Please describe any specific cultural characteristics that help shape the IWRP:

17. Is unemployment (reduced opportunity for competitive employment) in the client's home area a consideration when writing an IWRP? How?

18. Describe the process of writing an IWRP.

Does the client contribute to the development of the IWRP goal? How?

Are your clients fully aware of the alternatives to competitive employment?

How were they made aware?

What are the limits or barriers to their knowledge about alternative employment?

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